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THE NOVICE OF SAINT DOMINICK

BY

MISS OWENSON,

AUTHOR OF ST. CLAIR.

For *Truth* and *Good* are one;
And Beauty dwells in them, and they in her,
With like participation. *Akenside.*

Forse se tu gustasse anco una volta,
La milissima parte delle Geoje,
Che gusto un core amato riamando,
Aireste repentita Sospirando,
Perdutto e tntto il tempo,
Che, *in* amor non se spenda. *Tasso.*

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. IV.

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NOVICE OF ST. DOMINICK.

CHAP. IX.

———E a che sorvite
Odoni di fortuna? a che per voi
Tanto sudar, se quando poi sdignato
Il ciel con noi si vede
Defendete si mal chi vi possiede?

METASTASIO.

THE following morning Imogen rose late, and when she descended from her boudoir to the library found the chevalier there before her. "This is kind indeed," said she, holding out her hand to him; "and yet I never wished, and never feared "more to see you—for I am sure you are "displeased with me."—"That assurance, "Imogen, argues a consciousness of your "having given me cause."

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" The conversation you overheard yes-
" terday—"

" Pained me, Imogen, beyond expres-
" sion."

" And yet, my dear chevalier, 'tis so
" hard to resist, when—when—"

" I understand you:—'tis so hard to
" resist the influence of example, and the
" opportunity of shining; to repress the
" *jeu d'esprit* which covers the malignity
" of a personal reflection; to efface from
" the lip the bon-mot which sanctions
" an ill-natured remark; and to sacri-
" fice illiberal wit at the shrine of hu-
" manity and benevolence."

" Oh! sir, say no more! Spare me, I
" entreat; do not make me hate myself
" beyond the power of ever regaining my
" own approbation."

" No, my sweet friend, I do not wish
" to make you hate yourself, but to ren-
" der you the object of the world's love
" as you now are of its admiration, and

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"to warn you against the seducing al-
"lurements which distinguished talents
"hold out to their possessors. Every
"one, Imogen, is not acquainted with
"the benevolence, the goodness of that
"sensible and tender heart, whose hu-
"manity would shrink from wounding
"the feelings of the most inconsequent
"being: but those severe sallies which
"the unguarded impulses of lively wit
"betray you into—those who are its
"objects will make the criterion by which
"your heart is to be judged, and though
"some may admire, the many will con-
"demn, and all will fear you. The la-
"dies who were the subjects of the
"marquis de Sancy's severe raillery yes-
"terday, were the countesses de Noirmou-
"tier, de Sauves, and Duzes, whose influ-
"ence at court has been long established,
"and the latter of whom I have the ho-
"nour to call a near relative." Imogen started, and changed colour. "She in-

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" tends paying you a visit to-day," continued the chevalier; " and seems anxious " to render you every service and attention in her power." Tears of self-condemnation swelled to the eyes of Imogen, and she raised them in silence, with a meek and deprecating glance, to the chevalier's face. " It is enough," said he, touched with the eloquence of her looks; " 'tis enough, while contrition ever pursues the conviction of involuntary error; " while the sweet tear of penitence pursues the blush of witty, but illiberal " triumph, I shall not fear for you. Long " may the goodness of your heart surpass " the brilliancy of your head, and your " genius shine most conspicuous when " exerting its divine efforts in the cause " of humanity!"—" Oh! rather wish," exclaimed Imogen, in emotion, " that I " may long be worthy the possession of " your friendship, and that will include " all I am most desirous of attaining to."

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The eyes of De Sorville glistened with pleasure, and raising her hands to his lips he gaily said, "And now, my charming "penitent, here ends my dictatorship for "the day."

"Then you expect to resume it diur-"nally, I suppose," said Imogen; "and "that I, a Penelope in morals, shall undo "every evening the *web* of reformation "you have assisted me to *weave* in the "morning."

The chevalier was about to answer in the same playful style, when a crowd of visitors was announced; and the chevalier, as was usual with him on such occasions, took his leave.

There is an influenza in fashion which even the sobriety of judgment cannot resist; and once the fantastic goddess reflects some favourite in her flattering mirror, the giddy multitude rushes forward on the tip-toe of expectation to behold, to admire, and to approve. The faith of the

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many reposes on the doctrine of the few; and the faintest respiration of fame receives a deathless echo from the babbling tongue of awakened popularity.

A week only had elapsed from the period of Imogen's introduction at court, and that notoriety which even the secret ambition of the novice of St. Dominick had panted to possess was now all her own. That interesting, that piquant charm, which breathed around her person; those native and soul-born graces, more beautiful than even beauty itself; the splendour of her rank and fortune, and the brilliancy of her talents and acquirements, were at least sufficiently attractive to render her the object of general admiration, and to have given her a decided consequence in the high sphere in which she moved. But they carried not with them the magic influence to render her the object of tonish popularity, the cynosure of fashion, and the model of imitative inferiority. For

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with every requisite to obtain celebrity, Imogen, like many others, was chiefly indebted for its possession to a whimsical coincidence of circumstances, or to the self-love of those in whose hands the power of bestowing it was vested. The marquis de Sancy, flattered by the pleasure with which she hung upon his brilliant conversation, and the compliments which in the unmodified ardour of her manner she had paid to his talents, and perhaps not indifferent to the charms of her person and genius, cried her up every where as a wit of the first order. The duke de Montmorency, whose sated heart found in her that novelty which alone had now the power to awaken a thrill on its languid pulse, established every where the fame of her beauty. And the king (to whom the duchess de Guise, in the kind policy of her friendship, had repeated many of those enthusiastic and rapturous expressions of admiration with which Imogen had dwelt

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on the character, the virtues, and talents of her accomplished sovereign) spoke of her amiable originality, even in the presence of the fair Gabrielle.

In a short time, therefore, the hotel de St. Dorval became the constant resort of all that was most distinguished in Paris for rank, talents, or fashion. The gaiety, the freedom that reigned there; the novel style of the entertainments, over which the Graces themselves seemed to preside; where Epicurus might have revelled, and Plato have enjoyed the feast of reason; together with the spell of fascination that lurked in the celebrity of its young and charming mistress; all contributed to render it the temple of refined and elegant pleasure, of rational, as well as of fashionable amusement: while the constant society of madame de Rosemont afforded to the unrestrained conduct of the gay and volatile heiress a matronly sanction, and her engagements with the chevalier de

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Sorville an honourable protection and an inviolable safeguard.

The nature of her connection with her amiable guardian had soon become a topic of fashionable publicity and discussion; and as the disparity of their years, and apparently of their dispositions, rendered it generally believed their projected union was the result of family prudence, or parental policy, it was a circumstance that rather allured than distanced the homage of gallantry; and the youth and unguarded vivacity of its object hourly added to the number of its votarists by whom she was surrounded: while her enthusiastic admiration of genius and talents, her profuse and boundless liberality to those who possessed them (many of whom made professional claims on her taste and generosity), soon obtained her the reputation of being the most distinguished patroness of literature and literary persons in Paris, and

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rendered her house equally the resort of prosperous merit and indigent genius.

De Servin, whose extraordinary and versatile talents, all wonderful as they really were, were still exceeded by the number and extent of his evil qualities; who has been characterized by cotemporary writers as a miracle of genius, and a monster of vice, and who united, in an eminent degree, all that adorns human nature to all that depraves it, found in his dazzling abilities an irresistible lure to the favour of the young lady de St. Dorval, who saw not beneath the most brilliant assemblage of talents, and the veil of fascinating manners, an heart so vicious, that even that minor morality, the concomitant of taste and superior education, had failed to correct those strong traits of evil propensity which rendered him daringly wicked, or insidiously vile. And this profligate genius, whose depraved character had not

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yet unfolded itself to public observation, had the talent to extort the warmest admiration from the elegant taste of his generous benefactress, and the indelicacy to raise incessant contributions on her purse.

Colin, the courtly poet, who veiled in poetic drapery the amatory effusions of the king, who wooed his successive mistresses through the medium of his harmonious numbers; Belleau, and Ronsard, who could always so artfully diffuse the chastened charm of sentiment over those propensities and pursuits which rigid morality discontenanced, were among the most constant and welcome visitors of the hotel de St. Dorval.

De Mempsel, the satyrist, who possessed the art of being agreeable as well as severe; D'Aubigné, the king's ecurid, whose conversation was fruitful in the happiest sallies, and whose social powers were not inferior to his literary talents,

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were delighted to preside at those attic little suppers, where Imogen herself appeared in the happiest of her phases. The old courtier de Rouquelaure, whose wit was as playful as it was harmless; the celebrated bishop of Rouenne, the companion of his youthful frolics; Simon de Nicholas, the king's secretary, so generally courted for the facetious whimsicality of his manner; and Zebastian Zamet, the elegant voluptuary, at whose festive table royalty itself delighted to unbend from the fatigues of the cabinet and the formalities of the court, frequently enlarged the circle at the hotel de St. Dorval, which was adorned by all that Paris afforded of female beauty, or female intelligence.

Imogen was too conscious of her musical excellence not to exert her influence in bringing the most charming of all the sciences into fashion; and whilst her private concerts were among the first known at Paris, she liberally rewarded and pub-

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licly countenanced the professional musicians of the day. The celebrated Bussy D'Amboise, Davy du Perron, M. Des Portes, with many others of equal merit, if not with equal celebrity, contributed their fascinating powers to the pleasures of her elegant entertainments.

Mean time, among the many who affected to adore her genius, or who really admired her mental and personal accomplishments, the marquis de Sancy continued the most marked and most favoured in his attentions; while Imogen, gay, careless, and unguarded, neither encouraged nor rejected that species of homage which she soon perceived every pretty woman of her acquaintance, whether married or single, exacted and received. The licentious manners which had long prevailed in France (and which a long course of civil wars had introduced), had relaxed many of those moral ties, which, though gradually re-uniting under the influence of

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peace and progressive refinement, were still far from being firmly coalesced; and the libertinism of the day, sanctioned by the professed and boundless gallantry of the king, who continued to love

"Free and unquestion'd in the wiles of love,"

boasted of holding its prerogative by royal authority. Imogen, but too secure in the almost infantine simplicity of her heart, insensibly glided into the popular manners of the day, influenced by the example of all who surrounded her, while the principles which accompanied this elegant levity were not only unknown, but unsuspected by her pure and virtuous mind. Among the women she had more rivals than intimates; and secret depravity, with her never encountered the risk of detection, through the unguarded effusions of boundless confidence. And though, in the circle of her male acquaintance, licentiousness smiled at the self-denying pre-

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cepts of rigid morality; yet the society of man is never openly dangerous, but to the female innately depraved or incorrigibly weak. Imogen, therefore, thoughtless of evil herself, perceived not that it often lurked beneath the decent drapery of outward decorum, or concealed its features under the attractive mask of elegant blandishment and refined propriety.

The society which assembled at her house was indeed, in the eye of the world, unexceptionable: but the chevalier de Sorville saw not with the world's eye. He alone trembled for the safety of his ward: —while others envied, he pitied; while others admired, he condemned; while others applauded, he reproved her. He beheld her surrounded by seducing dangers; he saw her borne away by their magic influence; and with a secret mortification he discovered, that she who in misfortune was a heroine, in prosperity was a mere woman, and that the native

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strength of her understanding was not only counteracted, but overwhelmed, by the vivacity of her temper, the fire of her genius, and the propensities of her taste. From the fairy visions of a glowing imagination, from the golden dream of the delighted senses, he repeatedly endeavoured to rouse her slumbering reason; and her boundless expenditure, her indiscriminate liberality, her expensive pursuits, and extravagant establishment, were the frequent themes of the few private conversations the perpetual hurry of pleasurable engagements allowed her to grant him. Imogen sometimes answered his mild, but firm, remonstrances with playful raillery; sometimes with a spirited opposition, that betrayed an independence of mind revolting from the curb of every restriction unimposed by its own native sense of right; and sometimes, when the heart obtained a momentary triumph over the passions, with that open, ingenuous confession of

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her errors, and that lively regret for their commission, which almost expiated the frailty it avowed, and convinced her solicitous friend that in her abandonment of prudence she still clung to the bosom of pure and unmodified virtue. It was during one of these interesting moments of self-condemnation, when contrite tears swam in her eyes, and vows of amendment floated on her lips, that De Sorville, though in the most delicate manner, hinted at the probable danger of her encouraging the pointed attentions of the marquis de Sancy, except she had the most unequivocal reasons for supposing them of a serious nature. Imogen started;—this was a singular warning from the man who in a short time was to possess so sacred and inviolable a claim to her undivided heart, and she involuntarily exclaimed,

"Of the most serious nature! Good "God! sir, what do you mean by so ex- "traordinary a caution?"

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With a firm voice and dignified air, De Sorville replied, "I mean, lady, to pro-
"mote your happiness, even though its
"purchase is made by the sacrifice of my
"own. This it is to truly love; unwor-
"thy of the sacred name is that passion
"which selfishly makes its own individual
"felicity the object of its pursuit. Yes,
"Imogen; I could resign you to another,
"though my heart broke in the effort;
"but I will confess I should not wish
"that other was—Harlay de Sancy. In
"the flowery path of amatory dalliance
"few have gathered more laurels than
"your accomplished friend. But, Oh!
"Imogen, that profound tenderness of
"which thy heart is capable—thy heart
"demands; that ever renovating flush of
"passion thy ardent feelings require, and
"could bestow: dare you seek, dare you
"hope to find them in a connection with
"the dissipated de Sancy?"

Imogen hid her face in her veil, while

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her heart secretly exclaimed, "Where "dare I seek—where can I hope to find "them?"

"Forgive me," continued the chevalier, affectionately taking her hand, "if "in speaking from the dictates of my own "feelings I unavoidably wound yours; "but—"

"Forgive you!" interrupted Imogen. "Oh, all despicable as I must appear in "your eyes, do not think quite so lowly "of me as for a moment to suppose me "insensible to the benevolence of your "nature, or the magnanimity of your "soul. No; heaven is witness that I "esteem and reverence you above all hu-"man beings, and that that heart which "you now believe the prey of every folly, "throbs not at this moment with a senti-"ment more warm, more tender, more "profound, than that with which you "have inspired it."

"My sweet friend," exclaimed the che-

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valier in great emotion, while delight's warm beam illumined his countenance; "my sweet friend, this is too much; it is "even more than I meant to exact from "you; I did not indeed for a moment be- "lieve de Sancy had touched your heart, "for, Oh, Imogen, I fear—I feel—the "great, the profound emotions of which "that tender sensible heart is capable lie "yet torpid and unawakened. But to your "active and ardent disposition some ob- "ject of interest is indispensably requi- "site; and he who failed in vanquishing "your heart has captivated your imagi- "nation. Oh! Imogen, you are not "formed for the world in which you live; "and even in the midst of all the plea- "surable, but empty enjoyments it can "bestow, you are all, all the slave of "your imagination:—you are bewildered, "but you are not satisfied; you are in- "toxicated, but you are not happy."— With these words, and obviously agitated,

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the chevalier kissed the hand he held, and hastily retired.

"I am not happy," repeated Imogen to herself; "I am not indeed happy:" and she burst into tears. "Oh! de "Sorville, how cruel is the effect of "that solicitude which urges you to "tear the veil from the heart whose feel- "ings and whose wants I would hide "from myself; to awaken me from that "dream of peace in which I blindly re- "velled, and touch upon that bosom- "chord where all my joys and all my "sorrows hang." It was now for the first time since Imogen had plunged into the rosy tide of pleasure, or floated in soft delirium on its traiterous wave, that reflection dissipated the fairy spell with which she had cheated herself into seeming bliss, and taught her to understand the nature of those feelings which often hung a gloomy shade upon the brilliant gloss of joy, and dimmed with a tear the frolic

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smile which the triumph of every long cherished wish illumined in her eye.

Why, when the adulation of a world was offered up at the shrine of her genius and her charms, did her unsatisfied soul so often turn on itself in anxious search for something dearer to its feelings than the world's adulation could bestow? why, even in the moment of pleasurable delirium, did her sated senses sicken in the midst of their gay enjoyment? or why, when gallantry wooed her delighted attention with all the persuasive rhetoric of assumed passion, did her ear refuse to convey its homage to her heart, and her lip exhale the sigh of pensive and abstracted reflection?—"It is," said Imogen, "because every "thing dissipates, and nothing touches "me; because my heart is all a void, a "frightful void, and my affections, chilled "and withered, in vain seek an object to "kindle their warmth and awaken their "energy. And what is praise, unheard

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" by one in whose triumph only we can
" truly triumph?—and what is pleasure,
" if the heart participates not in its illu-
" sions?"

Often indeed, after the gay and dissipated orgies of the day, had Imogen sought her couch without being pursued thither by one felicitous recollection rescued from the multitude of enjoyments which had pressed their treasures on her acceptance; and it was then that the faded vision of her soul-felt bliss floated o'er awaking memory, and that the now passive heart stole from the recollection of its former felicity one sweet emotion to warm its latent nerves:—for the rich, the noble, the far-famed lady de St. Dorval remembered on her purple couch of down the golden dream that once hovered over the humble pillow of the novice of St. Dominick; that dream which was but the reflected vision of her waking joys; that dream which gave back to her imagination the inter-

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course of soul she had recently supported with the minstrel of Provence. Her heart kindled at the endearing remembrance—but despondency chilled the transient glow, and many a tear stained that cheek which the ensuing day beheld dimpled with the sportive smile of pleasure: for, denied that supreme happiness of which her soul was capable, she pursued the attainment of all those lesser joys fortune had placed within her grasp, and pursued them with all that unmodified ardour which marked the enthusiasm of her character, and the vivacity of her disposition.

The last day of her first five weeks' residence at Paris, was that on which Imogen had completed her twentieth year, and, according to her father's will, was of age. On this day a splendid entertainment was to be held at the hotel de St. Dorval; and a short time previous to the assembling of her guests, the chevalier requested and obtained a private audience of Imogen in

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her cabinet. Presenting her a paper, he said with a smile—"It is an old fashioned "act of civility to present a birth-day gift; "and yet it is among the number of "those little antiquated interchanges of "social courtesy which time seems wil- "ling to rescue from the revolutions of "fashion."

"And this, I suppose, my dear friend," said Imogen, looking at the paper, "is a "letter patent of immortality, drawn out "by your long silent muse in favour of "your humble servant, and in the form "of a birth-day ode."

"No," said the chevalier, smiling; "it is a more humble conveyancer of poor "temporal dignity."

Imogen looked again at the paper—the royal seal was attached to it—Imogen changed colour.

The chevalier in a graver tone continued—"That ancient and illustrious title "which a series of ages have witnessed in

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" possession of your ancestors, but which " by the influence of the Salique law be- " came extinct with your father's life, the " king has been graciously pleased to " grant to his daughter. This paper con- " tains the letters patent of your nobility : " that which by inheritance you could " not possess, by the king's royal grant is " yours. Long may the countess de St. " Dorval wear the coronet of her ances- " tors, and shed new lustre on her distin- " guished rank—from the light of her " more distinguished virtues."

The important paper still trembled unopened in the hand of the youthful countess—the deepest tint of crimson burnt on her cheek—bright was the beam of her flashing eye—nor was its brightness dimmed by the tear of grateful emotion through which it sparkled.

" Your silence," continued the chevalier, " is eloquent; but to the grateful " feelings which now swell your breast I

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" have no other claim than that which a " wish to serve you confers; the power " (enviable power!) was reserved for an- " other, whose ability, though not his " will, far surpasses mine. I have only " interested those in your favour whose " interest is more powerful in every re- " spect than my own, and acted but a " subordinate part to a successful, though " a concealed agent."

" A concealed agent!" repeated Imogen.

" On this subject," said de Sorville, " you must suffer me to be silent. Suffice " it to say, that those whom you least " suspect are most anxious for your hap- " piness and honour; and that the king " met the wishes of your friends more " than half way, and this morning, in " the midst of a large circle at the apart- " ments of the duchess de Beaufort, made " public the honours he had conferred on " you. Prepare yourself, therefore, this

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" evening for the felicitations of an adu-
" latory crowd; but in the midst of its
" interested homage recollect that one
" glance of approbation which virtue
" elicits, one look of applause which
" merit attracts, is worth all that servility
" ever paid to rank, or interest ever of-
" fered at the shrine of power."

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CHAP. XXXI.

——— " Innumerabile
Son l'incantissima
Son, l'arte magica
Del Dio d'amor."

GUARINI.

Assumes a various feature to attract,
With charms responsive to each gazer's eye,
The hearts of men.

THE court was never more brilliant, never more crowded, than on the festival of St. Denis, the patron saint of Paris, the day on which the countess de St. Dorval, supported by the duchess de Guise and the marchioness de Bellisle, went to kiss the king's hands on her elevation to the dignity and title of her ancestors. Although still in the habit of filial grief, on this occasion she cast her " nighted co-

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" lour off:" the brilliant diadem of peerage for the first time encircled her polished brow, and glittered amidst the luxuriance of her shining tresses; the purple folds of her velvet robe were confined to the symmetry of her arms, waist, and bosom with diamond clasps of immense value; and her zone (which, like the mysterious cestus of Venus, seemed endowed with the power of conferring on its wearer a grace even more than human) was composed of the most precious gems: never had she before appeared so splendid in her attire, so beautiful in her person, so animated in her air, or so bewitching in her manner.

De Sancy made her the subject of an impromptu epigram; d'Aubigné said she recalled to his mind the queen Margaret de Valois in her nuptial robes; and the old baron de Roquelaure swore by his patron saint that nothing more captivating had appeared at court since the days of

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the beautiful Mary Gaudoin, who in the reign of Francis the First had conquered by her charms the sacred infallibility of the pope himself. * The king received her graceful acknowledgements in a manner so gallant and flattering, that almost transferred the homage he received to the object from whom it flowed. And as he condescendingly fastened a bracelet that fell from the arm of the blooming countess, he impressed the tribute of a kiss on her hand as he relinquished it. The fair Gabrielle turned pale; the ladies immediately within the circle exchanged looks of equivocal expression; and the courtiers, flocking in crowds round the "Cynthia of the "moment," traced preferment in every soft propitiatory smile, and beheld in the intelligent beauty of her countenance an index to a volume of honours.

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* Pope Leo the Xth.

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Mean time the youthful peeress, delighted and delighting, conversed alternately with her gracious sovereign, or received the felicitations of the crowd who surrounded him, with dignified and graceful ease, the glow of modest confusion and triumphant pride blushing on her cheek, her eyes beaming with the brilliant emanation of an elated soul, created to command, and proudly fulfilling its destiny; while her wandering glance sought every where for homage, and every where received it.

But what—what to thee, oh! child of sentiment! child of passion! over whose sensible and glowing heart nature still preserved her sweet and boundless influence even in the empire of art—what to thee was the adulation of worlds or the homage of kings, compared to that look which met thy unfixed eye, arrested its varying glance, thrilled over thy heart's vital nerve, and awakened in thy soul a feeling more

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poignant, more extatic, more powerful, than all ambition, vanity, or pride ever inspired in their warmest paroxysm of fruition? The triumph of the novice of St. Dominick was now, and now only, complete, for the minstrel of Provence was its witness. The too frequently illusive senses did not now impose this always welcome cheat; it was now no vision of enamoured fancy that roused every pulse to rapture's wildest throb; it was the friend of her soul, the object of her heart's first love, the hero of her imagination, who now, after an absence of near two wearisome and lagging years, presented himself before her. But oh! how changed from the blooming bard of Montmorell—the gallant victor of Laon!

Imogen first beheld him leaning against a pillar; his arms folded, his glance fixed on her, the rose of health withered on his cheek, the fire of youth extinguished in his eye: but when in the communion of a

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look their souls held momentary intercourse, a lambent flame floated on his gaze, and his cheek seemed to catch the truant crimson that fled from hers. At that moment the king approached him, and twining his arm in that of his favourite's, they passed on through the door that led to his majesty's private apartments. Many were the eyes that pursued the object of this enviable distinction; but Imogen, pale, trembling, and breathless, turned her's another way; a secret joy thrilled through her whole frame, and poured its crimson tide over the snow, amazement the most powerful had shed on her cheek and bosom, which now again flushed with the tints of "love's proper hue." To conceal the perturbation of her feelings, which every feature betrayed, Imogen turned her glance from that point to which the gaze of the multitude was directed; and encountered the all-observing, all-searching look of the chevalier de Sor-

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ville. The warm flow of blissful emotion chilled in every vein; a convulsive start shook her frame, a deadly faintness diffused its languor over every nerve, and she clung to the arm of the marchioness de Bellisle for support; who observing her emotion, inquired into its cause, and furnished Imogen with an excuse by supposing the heat of the court had overcome her; then leading her to an open window, presented her some reviving drops. Imogen, recovered by the air, endeavoured to collect some presence of mind; and still more recovered by observing the chevalier de Sorville had just left the audience chamber, attempted to answer the inquiries which poured in on every side, not only with ease, but gaiety.

"Mere mortality," said she to De Sancy, who stood next her, "could sup-
"port it no longer;—one should at least
"have the fortitude of a primitive saint
"to sustain the intoxicating flattery of

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" you courtiers, or the constitution of a " salamander to exist in your atmosphere. " —Is not the heat insupportable, my " lord ?"

" I am glad you find it so," said De Sancy, laughing; " for it is but just your " crime should become your retribution ; " and that you, who have kindled a glow " in so many hearts to-day, should share " in the sufferings you have created."

As the court was now beginning to thin, Imogen presented her hand to De Sancy, who led her to her carriage ; and as they crossed the great hall of the palace, Imogen again beheld the object of her still agitated thoughts ; he was leaning on the arm of the chevalier de Sorville, and slowly ascending the steps of Charles the Ninth's gallery, which joined the Thuilleries to the Louvre. Imogen's hand trembled in that of De Sancy's, who fixing his eyes on her face, demanded, " Do " you know the duke de Beauvilliers ?"

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"No," faintly replied Imogen, while her head, her heart, her imagination, were full of the baron de Montargis.

"No!" repeated De Sancy, with a smile of seeming incredulity: "but in-
"deed he is better known as the gallant
"baron de Montargis, whose venturous
"and romantic spirit has made him the
"idol of the women, and the favourite
"of the king, who has himself much of
"the *preux chevalier* in his amiable cha-
"racter. De Beauvillier is certainly the
"most enviable of all human beings.
"You perceive by his habiliments he has
"just obtained his emancipation from the
"matrimonial shackle." Imogen started; the colour came to and fled from her cheek in a moment. Luckily her carriage was not yet drawn up, for she had scarcely power to move. "And to add to his
"good fortune," continued De Sancy,
"he got rid of a peevish old father and
"a silly young wife in the same week:

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" the one died in a fit of political spleen,
" the other in giving birth to an heir to
" the illustrious honours of the family de
" Montargis: and the young duke, after
" having indulged his filial and conjugal
" sorrows for the period of three months
" amidst the cypress shades of Montargis,
" is now come to Paris to recruit his spi-
" rits, to regain his place in the king's
" favour, and to afford a boundless source
" of speculation to the disinterested beau-
" ties of the court, to whom, in the gal-
" lery of rank and fashion, a young, rich,
" handsome, and accomplished duke will
" appear a star of the first magnitude
" and splendor."

The state carriage of the lady de St. Dorval having now drawn up, the marquis placed her in it, demanding if she meant to grace the arsenal with her presence the following day, as the king himself was to be there, and to run at the ring. Imogen only bowed her head, she had not the

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power to articulate a word, and the carriage drove off.

Love in an heart which receives its every motion from the sphere of affectionate feeling, to which the existence of lively and powerful sentiments is an indispensable necessity—love in such a heart is not to be vanquished even by the influence of reason. Variety may distract, time may ameliorate, or absence weaken; but if the passion is not succeeded by another of equal force, if it changes not its nature, its vital spark will still exist, even though the effervescence of its primitive glow may be partially extinguished; and the object of its inspiration will still retain the power to reanimate its latent principles, and to dissolve the frost which the chilling hand of time or disappointment had shed over it. Imogen had endeavoured to cease to love, where still to love was weak, if not criminal; and coincident circumstances had assisted her in the effort, though they had

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not enabled her wholly to accomplish the self-imposed task. She had even endeavoured to transfuse the glow one object had illumined in her heart to those mild and moderate sentiments another had inspired. But the affections, arbitrary in their nature, flow not to the impulses of reason, but lavish their treasures independant of the will of their possessors. The utmost success, therefore, of her endeavour had been to lull the dear, but dangerous, recollection of one being into doubtful forgetfulness; and to feel for the other an habitual tenderness, a lively gratitude, a profound and almost reverential esteem. With the one she would have tasted bliss in all its most profound supremacy; but from the very nature of her refined and exquisite feelings, it would have been as variable as it was acute, as fragile as it was ardent; for even amidst the sweetest roses of enjoyment, the trembling hand of timid doubt would have

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flung its thorns, and jealous apprehension, like a wily serpent, would have cankered the bosom of every budding pleasure, and preyed on the sweets of every new-born joy. In her connection with the other, she would at least have been rationally happy; for the fanciful chimera of a too fond and all-desiring, all-doubting heart, would not have disturbed the sober placidity of her uniform, but contented destiny. Such was the comparative estimate her good sense had formed between what she might have been—and what she should be.

To the latter she had been long resigned, when to a sense of the former she was again awakened by the unexpected appearance of the duke de Beauvilliers—even more interesting, though less dazzling in his appearance; and more free, more the master of himself and of his actions, than when amidst the sequestered shades of Montmorell he had first stolen

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the virgin rose of her young affections. But though free, was he yet faithful; and though faithful, could she ever be his? was a question which Imogen's heart timidly suggested; but to which her reason sternly replied "Never."

That the name of the duke de Beauvilliers had scarcely ever been mentioned in her presence had often surprised her; although, from certain hints and inuendoes dropt by her numerous friends, she had reason to believe her adventure at the camp of Laon had obtained a pretty general circulation; and that even De Saucy was well informed of the countess de St. Dorval's being no other than the captive of the baron de Montargis, whom he had accused of violating the laws of war by monopolizing its richest spoil to himself. But that the chevalier had not mentioned to her the death of the young duchess de Beauvilliers, she supposed arose from his being equally ignorant of the circumstance

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as herself, and the duke having lately lived in such privacy, and such retirement from the world.

Imogen had but just reached her home, and was reclined on a couch, indulging those tears which flowed from a source whose existence she dared scarcely confess to herself, when mademoiselle d'Entragues rushed into the room, and flinging her arms round Imogen, exclaimed, "Then "it is but too true; something has ruffled "those charming spirits which render "you the soul of society: alas! that tears "should drop from those eyes where the "glance of triumph lately shone! Do "you know your sudden indisposition at "the Louvre is the theme of universal "discussion? I am just returned from the "hotel de Montmorency; the whole "court was assembled there, and nothing "talked of but your illness: some said "indeed that you fainted at the king's "leaving you for mademoiselle de Guise,

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" upon which that severe wretch, Dau-
" bigné, wrote an epigram, which he says
" he will insert in his life of the baron de
" Feoneste; then others said that what-
" ever was the cause, De Sancy was no
" sufferer by the effects, for you were
" seen tête-à-tête with him in one of the
" recesses in the great hall, after he led
" you from the audience chamber, upon
" which some one remarked—"

" I must beg," said Imogen, with dig-
nity, and without the least trace of her
former emotion, " that you will not trou-
" ble yourself to recollect any more of
" those unfounded and impertinent obser-
" vations, beneath you to repeat, or me
" to attend to. It is true I am but a
" novice in the world; but I am well
" aware of that idle spirit of detraction
" that governs the aggregate of society,
" which is oftener the offspring of unoc-
" cupied ignorance and simple inanity
" than premeditated malice: the mind

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" filled with the interest of its own re-
" flections; the heart occupied by the
" pungency of its own feelings, has no
" leisure for vague and foundless obser-
" vation on the conduct of others, and
" no inclination to convert another's ac-
" tions into malignant misinterpretation."

" It is all very true," said mademoiselle d'Entragues; " and you are the best proof
" of your own assertion, for your feel-
" ings and your reflections have apparent-
" ly involved you this morning beyond the
" possibility of their concealment."

Mademoiselle de Beuil now entered, accompanied by mademoiselle de Guise, both to inquire after the indisposition of Imogen; who, stimulated to exertion by the last pointed observation of mademoiselle d'Entragues, answered to their inquiries that she was just well enough to receive about a hundred and twenty people whom she expected at her concert that evening, and in which she should take a

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principal part herself. "I shall expect "you all," she added; "and pray lead a "crowd in your train, that I may satisfy "the longing anxiety of the dear world "who has interested itself so much in my "concerns."

Here a laquais entered with a note, which mademoiselle de Beuil playfully snatching out of Imogen's hand, exclaimed, glancing her eye over it, "What! a "billet-doux from the philosophic che-"valier, and you within a few weeks of "becoming his wife! Oh monstrous!" she then read aloud the following lines:

"This is one of your public evenings; "will you allow the duke de Beauvilliers "the honour to be numbered among your "guests, and to accompany to the hotel "St. Dorval Your

"DE SORVILLE."

"Very laconic indeed!—no solicitation

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" —in the true stile of a Spartan husband.
" Come, my dear little countess, what
" answer shall we send?" continued mademoiselle de Beuil, running to an open escrutoire.

" Whatever you please," said Imogen, with a faint smile, and endeavouring to repress her emotion.

In a minute mademoiselle de Beuil penned, and read aloud, the following reply—

" The countess de St. Dorval will be
" happy to have the honour of numbering
" among her guests the duke de Beau-
" villiers."

" Here," she continued, putting the billet into the laquais' hand, " that is sym-
" pathetically brief. And now, my dear
" countess, is not this same chevalier
" of yours a very daring man, to introduce
" to your notice the richest, noblest, hand-
" somest man in France?"

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"In this instance," said Imogen, "I "cannot praise his intrepidity.

"But you cannot be insensible to your "own," said mademoiselle d'Entragues, "for this young and interesting duke is a "dangerous acquaintance to a woman of "your character, who is already the pro- "mised bride of another, for he too pos- "sesses feeling and sentiment."

"And married a woman," said ma- demoiselle de Beuil, "who possessed nei- "ther. I suppose you know her story— "some say it was a forced union, others "that it was a long and mutual attach- "ment. Be that as it may, the poor "wretch looks as if he had undergone all "the horrors of martyrdom, and now came "among us to require the reward of his "sufferings: for my own part I will ho- "nestly confess I should have no objection "to dispense it myself."

The princess de Guise and mademoiselle d'Entragues laughed at her candour; and

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the three young ladies having promised to be among the first who filled the rooms of Imogen, took their leave.

Imogen underwent the form of sitting down to dinner with madame de Rosemont, but arose from the table without having touched a morsel; convinced of the danger of thought, she loitered with her placid guest until the lateness of the evening obliged her to retire to her dressing room: and when the apartments were illuminated, and thrown open for the reception of the company, she descended from her toilette in a dress less splendid indeed than that of which she had divested herself, but infinitely more in point with the character of her countenance and person. The aerial lightness of her snowy drapery, the verdant laurel that entwined her brow, the rich luxuriance of her folded tresses, the ardent expression of her wandering eyes, the fire of her countenance, and the wild throb of her heaving bosom, all

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touched her form with something more than human; and painting might have taken her as a model for a muse in the moment of divine inspiration.

Already the musicians had assembled.—Imogen on an elevated seat was placed in the midst of them at her harp.

The concert opened with a full overture, and general attention awakened from the influence of individual concern: at that moment the chevalier de Sorville and the duke de Beauvilliers entered the music room, and took their station at an illuminated pillar exactly opposite to their illustrious hostess. Presently the sound of the full band died away, the soft and mellow tones of the harp of Imogen only thrilled upon the attention; her finger's feathery touch at first awakened but a faint vibration from the chords—her cheek was covered with blushes—her eyes cast to the earth—and modesty obtained a momentary empire over genius: but the light of hea-

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ven was not to be obscured—it reillumined at the flame of love, and the eye-beam which sunk to the soul of the musician, roused all its greater powers of harmony: touched, rapt, inspired, while the influence of her various and exquisite emotions heightened the rapture of musical enthusiasm, she struck into a full and beautiful symphony, which gradually gliding into an accompaniment, followed with all the powers of science the melodious tones of her sweet, but half-repressed voice, in which sentiment predominated over execution, and which excited less wonder than emotion in the delighted auditors; until the air fading in a languid pause, gave play to the executive powers in a difficult and beautiful cantabile, whose dying close was lost in the effect which the full band striking up produced, and a bravura passage of wonderful skill and execution concluded the song.

Silence for a moment hung in delighted

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suspension between the intervals of surprise and admiration—then the murmur of admiration stole into the loudest acclamations of applause. Imogen arose, and, bending gracefully over her harp, received the plauditory homage with a blush of triumph, and a look of humility.

But the gratification of vanity, even the vanity of genius, is an evanescent emotion, if the heart endows it not with permanent existence. The splendid triumphs of Imogen's talents had hitherto hung no trophies on her memory. It was now for the first time they were eternized in the records of her heart; and the glance which registered them there, traced them in characters of living and imperishable fire.

When she descended from her musical throne, she found herself surrounded by a crowd; but she no longer received this applause with her usual graceful ease: her heart, though full, was still anxious; her eye, though smiling, was unfixed;

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but in a few minutes its glance was studied. She was obliged to withdraw from the crowd, and had just taken possession of a remote seat, when the chevalier approached, and led towards her the duke de Beauvilliers.

" I know," said he, as he presented his friend, " I know by anticipation what will " be the result of uniting two persons, " who, in tracing each other's perfections, " will soon lose sight of the few good " qualities I can lay claim to, but who " cannot feel for each other a more per- " fect esteem and friendship than I wish " them mutually to inspire—than I am " inclined to feel for both. To join in " bonds of amity the only surviving repre- " sentatives of the illustrious houses of De " Montargis and De St. Dorval, has long " been the anxious wish, and is now the " proudest triumph of my heart."

The duke bowed low, but was silent; Imogen dared not even trust herself to

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raise her eyes: the chevalier presented a chair to his friend by Imogen's; then taking his station at the back of her's, he continued: "How striking, how sweet the "contrast this scene presents, to that in "which you, my lord, last parted with "your charming captive! there all was "discord and danger, here all harmony "and pleasure."

"And yet," said the duke, "so inde-"pendent of situation is happiness, so "entirely does it steal its existence from "internal consciousness and the bosom's "home-felt sensation, that it is possible "the sigh of misery might arise amidst "the thronging pleasures of this festive "scene, and amidst the terrific tumult of "a camp felicity bestow its most radiant "smile."

"While we allow the possibility," said the chevalier, "which I am far from de-"nying, let us hope that we all rather "believe than feel it to be so."

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"For my part," said De Saucy, who had just joined them, "I believe we are "much more apt to seek misery than it is "to pursue us; there is something in it "consonant, perhaps, to the pride of our "natures; every man who suffers, fancies "himself an hero during the period of "his sufferings, and is sure to command "either the pity or admiration of those "who witness them. I must confess I "have always found happiness a very "thriving plant, independant of soil or "climate. I have gathered its delicious "flowers in a camp, and plucked them in "a court; and though I had hitherto "lived a sceptic to its existence, the form "I now see, and the voice I have lately "heard, would convert me from the pro-"foundest depth of infidelity into all the "superstitions of the most boundless cre-"dulity."

The marquis bowed low to Imogen; who, unable to reply, and glad to be re-

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lieved, consented to join mademoiselle de Guise in a favourite duo of Busy D'Amboines, who accompanied it himself on the organ. When she had finished, she found the duke and the chevalier still at her side: "The countess de St. Dorval is "doubtless much improved since you last "heard her sing?" said the chevalier, addressing the duke; "for though you are a "silent, I perceive you are not an insen- "sible auditor."

"Insensible!" repeated the duke, waving his head.

"I knew nothing of the science," said Imogen, hastily, "when I had the honour "to be known to the duke; and he is "doubtlessly too exquisite a musician to "receive any gratification from the per- "formance of one who has yet scarcely "escaped from the trammels of tuition."

"Pardon me, madam," said the duke, "genius like yours, however obscured by "modesty in your own estimation, cannot

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"be so unconnected with judgment as to
"render its possessor insensible to those
"merits in herself, to which in others she
"is so much alive. And oh! why talk
"of the trammels of tuition?—you, at
"least, are no imitative musician, but
"the foundress of a new style of music;
"in which nature and feeling only could
"have instructed you. Yours is indeed
"the music of the heart—it is the lan-
"guage of sentiment, of passion,—and,
"true to all its modifications, it breathes
"all those finer emotions of the soul to
"which words can give no being. Per-
"haps to be a truly fine musician, it is
"requisite to have loved; and to raise the
"art to its acme of perfection, the pre-
"sence of the object beloved should ani-
"mate the exertions of its magic powers;
"then it respires all the tenderness of the
"enamoured soul, and awakens even in
"the coldest bosom some faint glow of
"corresponding emotion."

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The duke, as he concluded, raised his eyes from Imogen, and fixed them expressively on the chevalier de Sorville; while Imogen perceived in this tribute to her musical talents, an oblique and delicate reference to her situation with respect to her guardian.

"But this charming science," said the chevalier, "is not the only spoils the "countess de St. Dorval has carried off "from the Tuscan muses; in painting, "her execution, and in statuary, her taste, "are by no means inferior to her musical "powers."

"My dear friend," exclaimed Imogen, "let not your partiality for the artist bias "your judgment with respect to her "work: do not raise that illusive ex-"pectation in another where a similar "partiality cannot exist to second its ef-"fects."

"All may not possess the chevalier's "judgment to appreciate the works," said

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the duke, with a cold bow and a colder smile; "but few, I believe, will be defi- "cient in partiality for the artist—though "not all in an equal degree. The sun, "though invariable in its nature, pro- "duces a different influence according to "the bodies on which it acts: some dis- "solve by its warmth, and others con- "dense by its ardour; while all which "revolve round it must receive their lu- "mination from its beams."

The duke bowed to Imogen; and shortly after, pleading an engagement at the Louvre, took his leave. At the same moment the chevalier was called on by the marchioness de Bellisle to make one at a party at lansquinet; and the marquis de Sancy and the lord high constable took their station at either side of their fair hostess: but for the first time she found it impossible to converse with the former, and did not even affect attention to the florid compliments of the latter.

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When the heart is all awake, the mind frequently slumbers, and the soul, wrapt in its own cogitations, rejects the accessary beam of imagination, and loves to repose from the airy flights of fancy.

Imogen, spiritless, silent, and abstracted, unable to repress her feelings, yet scarcely sensible that she indulged them, believed herself overcome with fatigue, and deputing madame de Rosemont to do the hônours of her house, seized on a moment when she was unobserved to steal away from the company, and retired to her own apartment: there flinging herself on a couch, (while the dark red flame of a wood fire spread round a gloomy light, and formed a striking contrast to the brilliant scene she had left,) overpowered, dissolved, almost ignorant of the nature of those conflicting feelings by which her bosom was agitated, she burst into a passion of tears which arose almost to convulsive sobs—when she suddenly found herself

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inclosed in the arms of mademoiselle d'Entragues.

"My beloved friend," she exclaimed, "what means this strong emotion?—oh! "why these tears? If the young, the "rich, the all-admired, all-adored coun- "tess de St. Dorval knows moments of "misery, who shall dare expect happiness "on earth?"

"You mistake," said Imogen, touched by the compassionating tenderness of her friend's manner, though shocked at her unseasonable intrusion, "I am not un- "happy; how indeed should I, possessing "every thing that can constitute happi- "ness? but there are intervals of depres- "sion, even in the bosom of felicity— "which—"

"Oh!" said mademoiselle d'Entragues, "'tis in vain you would conceal it; I "have long suspected that those vile re- "ports have reached your ear—so false and "so injurious."

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" What reports?" interrupted Imogen; " do not, I beseech you, keep me in sus- " pense."

" I would at least wish to put you on " your guard against those who profess " themselves your friends—but—"

" In mercy trifle not with my feelings: " what reports do you allude to?"

" Why, those circulated by the gascon- " ading officers of Laon, De Chatiauneuf " and some others—mere camp anecdotes " —nothing more."

" At least I intreat I may hear them."

" Well then, since you will have it so, " it was reported that you were only the " adopted daughter of the late count de " St. Dorval, while in fact you stood re- " lated to him in a very different light; " that you followed him to the siege of " Laon; were taken prisoner there by the " then baron de Montargis; that your " conqueror became your captive, and " that you would have very willingly

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" changed sides; but the chevalier de
" Sorville interfered, and carried you back
" to his friend, who in gratitude bequeath-
" ed you to the philosopher on his death-
" bed: and a thousand other ridiculous
" and incongruous stories, which carry in
" themselves such proof of their falsity
" that to hear and to discredit them is sy-
" nonymous. Has not (said I, the other
" day, to one of those chattering gossips
" who infest the court)—has not the king
" even restored to her the title of her an-
" cestors? upon which De Sancy, or De
" Mimpsel, or D'Aubigné, or some of those
" satyrical wretches who delight in the
" misfortunes of their best friends, imme-
" diately replied, Aye! but his majesty
" has always certain letters patent of no-
" bility, which pretty women can pur-
" chase, from a ducal coronet to a simple
" barony.—But indeed, my dear friend,
" it was a very simple thing of you to
" leave the music room when the duke de

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" Beauvilliers retired; every eye was upon
" you when he entered; it was observed
" too that the chevalier never left your
" side while his *soi-disant* rival remained
" near you; whose presence or whose ab-
" sence, said De Servin, your *protegée*,
" acted with magic force on our witty
" countess, for she was as silent as a
" faquar in the act of penance during the
" whole evening.—She did not indeed act
" with as much presence of mind, said
" the old lady de Normontier, as on the
" fainting occasion at the Louvre.—Aye,
" like poor Sappho, said D'Aubigné, she
" thinks the less her sense, the more her
" love appears; and the duke having al-
" ready proved his compassionating dis-
" position by marrying one love-sick dam-
" sel out of mere pity.—Upon which I
" interrupted him, and mentioned your
" engagement with the chevalier.—Aye,
" said somebody (I know not who), but
" the chevalier is a philosopher. But I

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"distress you by this folly. Heaven "knows how sincerely I love and admire "you, and how thoroughly I am con- "vinced that your singular merit, your "talents, and your genius, are the cause "of all the malice that envy has set afloat "against you."

With these words mademoiselle d'Entragues affectionately embraced Imogen, and wishing her a good night, returned to the company.

Never could the venom of malicious report have been distilled into the ear of Imogen with a less poisonous effect. Where two contending emotions struggle in the heart, the pre-eminence of one soon determines the contest. Love and mortification disputed the empire of Imogen's bosom; but the flight of her memory from the standard of the latter (for the remembrance of agonizing conviction is but transient) left love the sovereign of her heart.

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"Why," said she, clinging to the insidious flattery of her detailing friend, "why should those inconsequent effects "give me pain, where my own superiority "is the cause? and what is the opinion "of the world to a soul at peace with it-"self?—At peace with itself!" said Imogen, and heaved a deep sigh. Then by a sudden transition of thought the world disappeared, and the minstrel of Provence alone filled her imagination, her heart.—His more than ever interesting form, the tones of his voice, his peculiar mode of expression, the still glowing animated enthusiasm of his manner, gave back to her soul all those vivid emotions it was calculated to feel, all that it had so long lain under the prohibition of feeling. Again life appeared to her under a new aspect; again a vague and undefinable sensation of delight thrilled o'er every sense—but it was but as the sunbeam which ushers in the gloom of a gathering cloud, which

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gleams for a moment in dewy rays, then sinks beneath the vapoury mass:—her connection, her indissoluble connection, with De Sorville rushed on her recollection. The indifference with which the duke had alluded to that connection, and the world's suspicions that she was attached to the latter while on the point of giving her hand to the former, raised in her agitated bosom a variety of emotions, each more painful, more distressing, than that by which it was preceded. To disappoint the world, by shewing herself superior to its malicious efforts to destroy her happiness, was the immediate suggestion of her pride; to return the indifference of the duke de Beauvilliers with indifference commensurate to his own, was the dictates of her delicacy; and to continue firm in her resolution of becoming the wife of the object of her father's election, was the result of her prudence, her reason, and her honour.

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With these resolutions she retired to rest. The consciousness of good intentions lured the spirit of repose to her pillow: but while reason slumbered, love still kept his vigils, and in the dream of her sleep made the image of the minstrel the object of her devotion.

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CHAP. XXXII.

E qual sorte e la mia de pena in pena
Di timore in timor passo e non provo
Un momento di pace.

METASTASIO.

TO annihilate the budding hopes of envious malice, to crush suspicion in its infancy, to conceal the secret and corroding sorrow of her heart from the eye of public observation, to support that strength and equanimity of mind requisite to carry her through with the conquest of her warring feelings,—Imogen fled from the influence of reflection, and plunged into that vortex which the world calls pleasure. She had hitherto resigned herself to its power, in the utter deficiency of those greater, those profounder, enjoyments which her

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warm soul was created to feel: now, she became the willing slave of its laws to save herself from that bondage, whose shackles she felt would twist round the heart's most vital fibres.

"From pleasure," said she, "I can "always free myself; but should I suffer "a sentiment again to pervade my soul, "to fill my imagination, to fasten on my "heart"—She paused abruptly: though her exclamation was but mental, she dared not pursue the idea, for many a sweet and dangerous sensation clung to her as she proceeded in the argument.

Had Imogen listened to the documents of reason, of prudence, they would have told her, You deceive yourself—there is but one step left for you: retire from the scene where you still delight to loiter; retire from the object whom you still delight to behold; and become the partner of him on whose bosom only thou canst lay thy head in safety, whose mild nature will

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moderate the ardour of thine, for whom thou art destined, and by whom thou art beloved.

But what are the documents of reason when opposed to the sophistry of passion in an enamoured heart? Imogen dared not attempt a self-investigation, and continued deceived, because she wished to be so.

The circle at the hotel de St. Dorval continued daily to extend, and the entertainments of its hostess became more numerous and more brilliant; while her society was equally sought at home, or courted abroad. At the former the duke de Beauvilliers no longer appeared, after his first night's introduction: but in public he was frequently met by the countess de St. Dorval; in the brilliant crowd of fashion they were seldom closely associated. Yet not always did chance or premeditation preserve this distance between the novice of St. Dominick and the minstrel

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of Provence; there were moments of sweet community, when in the interchange of a few words all the eloquence of sentiment betrayed itself; when thought met thought, and the eye became a conductor to the soul's effusion; when in a broken sentence, a simple monosyllable, or seeming incoherent expression, a volume was unfolded; when the luminous region of genius, opening around them each for a moment, would sparkle with a beam caught from the scintillation of the other's fire; each would anticipate the other's idea, and explain them to themselves. But transient and unfrequent was the sacred communion of feeling and of mind:—the world would still rudely rush between; prudence would hang its icicle on the glowing soul; and duty, with an iron grasp, check the throbbing pulse of the tender heart:—then the golden vision vanished, and all was cold and hopeless. Imogen believed she should rejoice that

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the duke made not the faintest attempt to renew his intimacy with her, or to visit at her house; but she felt that she regretted it. While the chevalier, still maintaining his boundless empire in her esteem, lost with an hourly decrease his influence over her conduct, it was in vain he advised with the solicitude of a friend, or the authority of a guardian. Imogen, involved, borne away, alternately the sport of her feelings or her ambition, seeking to conceal the wants of her heart beneath the trophies of her vanity, evinced in her conduct that genius and common sense bear no inseparable relation to each other; and that even the virtues of the heart and the understanding are sometimes but remotely connected: for, while her charities flowed like an abundant and devious stream from the rich source of exhaustless benevolence, her justice slumbered; and the industrious creditor was frequently sent empty-handed from her door, because the

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indigent petitioner had already left it no longer indigent. While her open hand was humanely stretched forth to lead drooping merit from the cell of obscurity, it was of necessity closed on the claimant whose wants should have been satisfied, because her feelings and her taste had got the start of her equity; and while the name of Imogen de St. Dorval called a blush of pleasure on the haggard cheek of misery, and awakened a beam of joy in the eye of neglected genius, justice sued in vain for that which generosity lavished with indiscriminate profusion.

Mean time the Parisian court continued its winter campaign of pleasure with unabating spirit, and Imogen continued to frequent the Louvre, and to shine the brightest of its ornaments. The king himself invited her to accompany the court to Fontainbleau, whither he was going for a few days to enjoy the pleasures of the chase —the pride of Imogen was flattered by

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the invitation, but her heart denied its interest; for indisposition prevented the duke de Beauvilliers from attending the royal train, and the chevalier de Sorville refused the offer of an invitation from the duchess de Guise.

Imogen, whose drift had long been to appear every thing but what she was, to affect gaiety even to dissipation, and to pursue the phantom pleasure beyond the boundary of all rational moderation, appeared on this occasion with unusual taste and characteristic splendour. Mounted on a white palfrey, the brilliant crescent sparkling on her beautiful brow, the sandal betraying the symmetry of her fine-turned ancle, the quiver suspended from her shoulder, and a bow in her hand, she appeared amidst the splendid train of Dian like the presiding deity of the chase. Here, as in every other instance, the person of Imogen received its greatest charm from the power of her genius and her taste; and

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even the beauty of the duchess de Beaufort was eclipsed by the whim and originality of the countess de St. Dorval.

The second day of the stag-hunt all the ladies of the court (who the day before had appeared dressed according to the unrefined custom of the times on such occasions, *en cavalier*) adopted the habit *à la Diane:* the light and modest drapery of this habiliment converted the intrepid votarists of the chase into the attendant nymphs of the goddess of chastity, while many sportive vaudvilles and arch epigrams were the result of this sudden transformation. During this period of festive gaiety Imogen rather sustained than enjoyed her part: her senses were bewildered, her vanity gratified, but her heart was untouched; and the eye which emanated the brightest beams of pleasure during the day, at night dropt tears which flowed not from the source of extacy.

After an absence of four days, Imogen

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returned to Paris, weary of amusement—weary of herself; yet anxious that the celebrity which had attended her in her expedition should have arrived before her. She called immediately for her porter's book, and ran her eye over the names of those who had called in her absence; there were fewer women and more men than usual, but among the latter that of the duke de Beauvilliers did not appear. The evening of her return was that on which the wits and literati of Paris assembled at her house, and on which she had endeavoured to establish a conversazzioni, such as she had mingled in at Florence: but at Paris literary taste was not yet established on her throne; and though this species of attic entertainment was at first pursued with avidity, from the attraction of its novelty, its elegant foundress soon felt it was impossible to preserve it from those innovations which the want of a unity in

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taste and sentiment of its members continued to make.

All those who had not been invited to Fontainbleau, crowded on this evening to the hotel de St. Dorval to meet those who had. Among the numerous assembly was D'Aubigné, De Servin, De Mempsel, De Nicholas, De Sancy, Colin the poet, and several others whose talents endowed them with the immunity of an universal welcome.

Amidst this bright pleiads of wit, Imogen herself shone not with an inferior light; and was sportively flinging round her random beams, when the chevalier de Sorville and the duke de Beauvilliers entered the apartment.

Imogen endeavoured, and with some success, to conceal the pleasure, the surprise, the emotion, which this unexpected visit inspired: she pressed the chevalier's hand with more than usual warmth, and

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endeavoured to veil beneath the obvious pleasure with which she received him, the secret delight which throbbed her heart at the presence of his friend. Confused and agitated, in spite of every effort at composure and reserve, she received the compliments of her illustrious guest with an air hurried, though constrained; and felt relieved when the crowd gathered round him to enquire why he had not been at Fontainbleau. The gaieties of the court there, the pleasures of the chase, with all the fashionable politics of the day, then became the topic of general conversation: all who had been there triumphed in their enjoyments, and all who had not regretted their disappointment.

"Why were you not among us, De "Sorville?" said the marquis, addressing the chevalier; "your loss was irreparable: "for there was a nameless enchantment "in the pleasures of Fontainbleau that

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" might have warmed the cold heart of " misanthropy itself."

" Or transmigrated the spirit of an Al- " cibiades into the cynical soul of a Dio- " genes," said De Pervin, bowing low, and pointedly to De Sorville.

" Did you feel that it produced that ef- " fect," retorted the chevalier drily.

" Nay," said De Servin, " though I " had not the happiness to be there, I " can give credit to the metamorphosing " powers of the air of Fontainbleau ; for " I am told that several of our beauties " sent in their resignation to the court of " Paphos, and enlisted in the vestal train " of Diana."

" And the Journal d'Etoile tells us," said De Mempsel, " that each particular " nymph had her Endymion."

" While the presiding deity herself," said De Sancy, bowing to Imogen, " treat- " ed the many who panted to become her

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" Endymions with the rigorous fate of " Acteon."

" And like Acteon," said D'Aubigné, laughing, " they have been torn to pieces " by dogs; for the satyrical editors of the " Journal d'Etoile have been most bar- " barously severe on you all."

" If the rigorous strictures of our sa- " tyrists were to be made the standard of " the morality of the age," said the che- valier, " the present would be esteemed " the most virtuous in the annals of time; " but as more of the gall of individual " rancour, or the ostentation of wit, is " displayed in their bitter ephemera of " the hour, than sound reproof, or pointed " admonition, they do but sharpen the " point of private animosity, without ef- " fecting any public benefit."

" My dear chevalier," said De Servin, " you are like a child who vents his rage " on the rod which has inflicted his " wound; for I should almost be tempted

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" to believe that these haughty satyrists
" had handled you a little roughly."

" No," said the chevalier, coolly, " I
" have neither rank, talents, or virtues,
" to render the exposition of my failings
" an object of temptation to them; had
" I possessed them, my soreness on that
" point would not now be a matter of
" doubt to you, monsieur de Servin."

" De Servin," said Imogen, gaily, and eager to interrupt the keen retort which shone in the eye of her *protegée*, " have
" you nothing pleasant for me this even-
" ing? do not let me forget myself into
" mortality;—I thought my expedition to
" Fontainbleau would have roused all the
" witchcraft of your lyre!"

" Alas!" said de Servin, " my lyre, like
" that of Anacreon, was repulsive to its
" master's touch; and when I would have
" sung your triumphs, returned only ele-
" gies of woe for your loss."

" Then pray let us have your elegies

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"strains—come, we will adjourn to the "music-room, and if there are any who "wish to witness my apotheosis"—she paused abruptly, and cast a glance of smiling, though blushing, invitation on the duke de Beauvilliers. A glance only was the reply; a deeper blush, a sweeter smile, confessed the eloquence of the silent communion. She extended her hand, de Sancy seized it, and led her into the music-room; the few who surrounded her followed; the duke and the chevalier were of the number, the rest were engaged with *primero* and scandal. De Servin was an excellent *improvisatore*: he took up a lute, and after striking a few chords, sung an address to his charming hostess, in which the strongest flattery was chastened by the most delicate taste. The theme was sufficient to elicit the most boundless plaudits to the song; and the poet and his subject were equally complimented by the auditors; inspiration seemed awakened; de

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Sancy took the offered lute from de Servin, and sung an extempore replication to his strains, then presented it to the duke de Beauvilliers. "I do not touch the lute," said he, returning it.

"But the harp," murmured Imogen.

"The harp," repeated de Beauvilliers, fixing his eyes on her face. In a moment the instrument was drawn towards him; the duke for a moment paused, Imogen's eyes were cast on the earth, de Beauvilliers' on her. The silence of expectation flung around its stilly spell: from the harp of the minstrel arose the strain of passion, from his lips ascended the song of the soul; it was the song whose witching murmurs first awakened the slumbering spirit of harmony in the bosom of the novice of St. Dominick, when love stole its existence from the union of sentiment and sound, the latter thrilling on her senses, but the former reaching her heart. Now awakened the associating principle of feeling and thought

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in the breast of the lady de St. Dorval; memory rushed like lightning through each sweet interval of bliss; the present faded on the mind, fancy presented only the joys of the past; and Imogen of Montmorell again hung entranced upon those strains of which she had been the inspiration and the theme. The duke ceased: the room rung with applause, the countess de St. Dorval alone was silent; the duke was overwhelmed, but not by the repeated bursts of approbation, for he heard them not.

After a long, an eloquent pause, Imogen raised her eyes and found that of the groupe which surrounded her the duke only remained; the rest were taking refreshments from the hands of the pages, who had just entered laden with the choicest and most luxurious delicacies.

"You have lost nothing of that charming art, in which you formerly excelled," said Imogen in a tremulous voice.

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" Formerly excelled," repeated the duke emphatically; " do you then deign " to recall that formerly to your mind?"

" That is," said Imogen in a voice still less articulate, " since I first heard you: " since"—she paused abruptly.

" I remember the time well;" said the duke. " It was in the tapistry room of " the chatean de Montmorell. I was " summoned to the presence of the lady " Magdelaine: yes, she is now before me; " the formality of her air, the rigid severity of her looks, relaxing into a smile of " encouragement. She was surrounded by " her women; the simple cast of their " countenances, the grotesque fashion of " their habits: while you! you were seated apart, when I entered, your head " drooping over a frame. It was placed " near an open casement through which " the sun cast its last red beam as it " sunk behind the forest of Champagne. " I thought you blushed when your eye

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"met mine, but perhaps it was only the "sun's beamy glow which flushed your "cheek beyond its own rich tint, for your "veil had fallen on your shoulders, and "the beams of heaven played like a glory "round your head."

"And then," continued Imogen, while her heart beat, and every pulse throbbed with delicious violence, "and then the "lady Magdelaine made you one of her "classic speeches and commanded an ex-"ertion of your charming art; you bowed "and obeyed, while I"—

"And while I," added the duke expressively.

Imogen blushed deeply; the duke sighed and continued. "At the conclusion "of my song we parted; but again we "met. The moon had just risen above the "vale of Nogent; its paly light trembled "on the waves of the Aisne; a nightingale "had taken its station beneath the "branches of a linden-tree which shaded

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" the terrace of the castle whither I had
" directed my steps to inhale the evening
" breeze. I beheld you leaning over a
" palisade; the melting murmur of your
" voice flowed with the pensive strain of
" night's sweet bird, your tears dropped
" with its falling dew, and your sigh stole
" on the stilly interval of its unfrequent
" gales. Then I dared to approach, and—"

The profound, the tender, the impassioned emotion of Imogen, arose with every word; her colour varied, her heart throbbed: not knowing what she did, she half arose from her chair, then again sat down. At that moment a page approached and presented refreshments. Imogen, still bewildered, still confused, poured out a glass of wine, and presented it to the duke. Without taking it from her hand, he grasped it in his: the glass shook, for the hands which held it had communicated a reciprocal tremor to each other. The last draught which Imogen had presented to

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the baron de Montargis was in the camp of Laon: the recollection of that circumstance rushed with mutual influence to their minds; till, obedient to the immutable law of sympathy, the power of attraction, they felt they remembered together, and on the glowing surface of memory the images of riper passion succeeded to those of infant love, the hero of Laon and his enamoured captive to the minstrel of Provence and the novice of St. Dominick.

Their looks alone supported the communion of soul. "That moment," with impassioned emotion at last exclaimed the duke, "when faint and wounded I received the elixir of life from—"

Imogen endeavoured to extricate her hand: the glass was crushed in the exertion in that of the duke; the blood flowed from his fingers, and the fragments of the glass fell to the ground. In a moment a crowd gathered round him: all offered their assistance, but the trembling Imogen

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had already entwined her handkerchief round the wounded hand. The chevalier inquired into the cause of the accident: the duke took his arm, and they both walked away. Imogen still remained seated in the attitude in which the duke had left her; her air involved, abstracted, her eyes swimming in languor, her bosom throbbing, and an unconscious smile playing round her lips. At that moment the marquis de Sancy approached: he had watched her at a distance during the whole of her conversation with the duke; he now took his station at the back of her chair.

"It is," said he pointedly, "in the absence "of the sun, that planets of inferior order "dare to betray their feeble beams."

"What is your allusion?" demanded Imogen with a blush and a smile.

"Were you to ask what was my illu- "sion, I could answer you," said the marquis; "but for my allusion—"

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"You are problematic," returned Imogen.

"And yet that blush seems to under-
"stand me," replied he. "The duke de
"Beauvilliers—"

"What of him?" asked Imogen, again changing colour.

"That he is gone saturated with bliss,
"and I now venture to approach and pick
"up the crumbs which fall from the rich
"man's table."

"And was his absence requisite for you
"to approach?"

"Certainly; for I have not the self-
"denial of the philosophic chevalier, who,
"like the saints of old, seems to expose
"himself to trials merely to shew his for-
"titude in supporting them."

Imogen had so long been accustomed to hear the name and character of her amiable guardian the sport of satyrical wit or playful raillery, that what at first irritated and disgusted her, now from habit

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was heard without emotion. While she perfectly understood the pointed allusion of De Sancy, she endeavoured to give a new turn to the conversation by asking if he had engaged at primero during the evening.

"No," said he; "but if you have a "mind to throw the gauntlet I will pick "it up, and think myself honoured in the "challenge."

Imogen flung down her glove; the marquis raised it, impressed it with a kiss, and gallantly hanging it in his bosom, took her hand and led her to a table. Imogen disliked play—she was yet as great a novice at it as when she first lost her money at the hotel de Guise. She had however continued to pursue the dangerous occupation with avidity, and with invariable bad success, merely because she wanted some more interesting engagement; she was borne away by the tide of fashion, and wooed it in every possible form that it pre-

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sented itself. Her gaming debts already amounted to a considerable sum; but as she had hitherto lost chiefly to her female friends, she felt but little uneasiness from the circumstance.

The marquis de Sancy was one of the best primero-players in France—Imogen perhaps the very worst; and now wholly involved in the delightful cogitations of her awakened heart, she played with so little attention, with so little skill, and in the exhilaration of her spirits staked so high, that in a short time she lost all the ready money she was mistress of, and found herself the marquis's debtor for a sum treble what she had ever before contracted to any one. The marquis insisted on considering the debt as cancelled, except she gave him an opportunity of allowing her a chance of winning back some of her own money. Imogen by the instances of De Servin, who leaned at the back of her chair, was prevailed on. The game was

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begun with fresh spirit; fortune at first seemed to smile on Imogen, but before it was finished she had doubled her debt.

No one in general lost with more temper or more grace than Imogen. It was now for the first time her ease forsook her: she arose from the table in great perturbation; nor was it lessened by observing that the chevalier de Sorville had returned to the room, and was standing near her, though unperceived, during the latter part of the game. When Imogen mentioned the sum she had lost, and begged to be considered the debtor of the marquis de Sancy till the following day, she stole a glance at De Sorville, and observed his colour change as he walked away. De Sancy begged she would not limit his enviable privilege to a day; for that as long as she would do him the honour to consider him her creditor, he should sensibly feel himself her debtor. He then endeavoured to draw her into conversation;

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which Imogen endeavoured to support—but it was but an endeavour: and the company shortly after dispersing, the marquis took his leave, and Imogen retired to her own apartment.

The train of reflection she was so anxious to indulge in was frustrated by the presence of Beatrice, who, with a countenance full of intelligence, assured her she had the most extraordinary and wonderful circumstance in the world to relate, if she would allow her the honour of a moment's hearing.

Imogen, though never less inclined to indulge the loquacity of her attendant, with her usual good-nature gave her assent, and Beatrice began.

"Why, my lady, it is the most mar-
"vellous of all possible stories—thus it
"runs: You must know, lady, that the
"chief tire-woman of my lady duchess de
"Guise gave a party this evening at which
"I had the honour to be invited. Well,

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" there were none but laquais and sui-
" vantes of the first fashion there; espe-
" cially monsieur Francois, own gentleman
" to my lord marquis de Sancy, than
" whom I know not a more discreet or
" pleasant youth. It was he who pro-
" posed we should all go to the Louvre
" to see the Swiss guards reviewed by the
" king and the master of the ordnance;
" and scarcely had we reached the terrace
" of the capuchins than a young officer
" approached to speak to the musquetaire
" who stood sentinel at the great gate.
" We all made way for him to pass, when
" just looking under the plumes of his
" helmet, Christ! I thought I should have
" fainted; upon which monsieur Francois
" was so obliging as to offer me his blue
" glass smelling bottle—"

" But the young officer, Beatrice?"

" Why, lady, the young officer—holy
" Mother, how I screamed!—the young
" officer was little Theodora the page;

" but so thin, and so tall, and so hand-
" some!"

" Theodore!—and did he recognize
" you?"

" Instantly, lady—dear sweet soul, for
" all his gold, embroidery, and high plumes,
" he knew me in a moment, and gave me
" a courteous salute on the left cheek
" before every one—upon which it must
" be owned monsieur Francois looked ra-
" ther grave."

" But Theodore, Beatrice?"

" Well, good my lady, we both leaned
" over the palisado, while the demoiselles,
" my companions, appeared vastly proud
" to see such a noble looking cavalier in
" their company; and in the twinkling of
" a needle I told him your whole story,
" and how happy I was to meet you in
" dear Provence, for which I have never
" ceased to thank my patron saint—bless-
" ed Virgin! how red and how pale he
" grew! and how the tears rushed to his

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" eyes, and how sweetly he smiled. Then " in a few words he told me his adven- " tures: how he enlisted in his majesty's " service; and how in the course of time " he got into the regiment of the duke " de Beauvilliers. And now comes far " the most wonderful of all; I'll give my " lady a dozen guesses to find out who " this same duke is—why then no other " but the minstrel youth of Montmorell! " bless me, lady, are you not amazed?

" No," said Imogen, endeavouring to command her rising emotion; " for I am " already acquainted with the circum- " stance, and must request you will not " mention it in my family or elsewhere; " as the duke may not wish to have his " adventure publicly known, though then " sanctioned by the unhappy situation of " the times; and should you ever breath " it you must no longer hope for my friend- " ship or countenance."

" I, my lady!" returned Beatrice,

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eagerly; "I take the saints to witness I "would not tell it to my mother (God "rest her precious soul!) were she alive, "when you desired me not. No, not to "monsieur Francois himself; although he "was not a little curious about the fine "young officer who accompanied me home "here to the house; for I bade monsieur "Francois good evening in the great court "of the Thuilleries, as Theodore said he "wished to speak to me alone: and then "to be sure it was all about my lady "countess. He told me also the duke "had behaved like an angel, as soon as "he recollected him, which he did one "morning on parade in the public court; "and shortly after presented him a com-"mission; that he had been stationed in "one of the distant provinces with his re-"giment; and that he had only come to "Paris last night with dispatches, and "should return to his regiment in a few "days."

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" But I hope I shall see him before his departure?" said Imogen.

" He begged I would solicit my lady " for permission to wait on her to-morrow," returned Beatrice, " when he meant to " call at the hotel St. Dorval."

Amidst the extreme pleasure Imogen felt in the hope of again beholding, and perhaps of serving, a person to whose early and friendly exertions she was indebted for all her subsequent good fortune; with whom she had once been so closely associated, and whose amiable character she so much admired, a new source of unhappiness arose. In withholding from De Sorville the knowledge of her acquaintance with the duke de Beauvilliers under the character of the minstrel, she had hitherto sheltered herself in the vow of secrecy exacted from her by the latter a thousand times. The candour of her nature, the open ingenuousness of her character, had impelled the confession to her

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lips in those unguarded moments when the tenderness and the virtues of De Sorville had called on the boundless confidence of her heart; yet the delicate reserve of lingering love, and a sense of the promise that had been claimed of her, had always frustrated the intention: but now that the possibility existed of that circumstance reaching his ear by other means, she felt almost to remorse the error she had been guilty of. She was now in the power of her servant, who might reveal through simplicity what from principle she could not be tempted to betray; and in that of a young man, who was ignorant of the necessity of preserving that secret which it was now of such material consequence to her should not be revealed.

Still lost in wild perplexity of thought, still the victim of her warring feelings, Imogen suffered her servant to proceed without hearing a sentence of what she said, when one of her women rapped at

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the door, and sent in a slip of paper.—Imogen read the following lines, written in Italian.

"Suffer me to see you for five minutes —I await your presence in the music-room.

"DE SORVILLE."

Imogen had only divested herself of her head ornaments; and, although surprised at so late a summons, and unwilling under the influence of the emotions which agitated her bosom to meet her guardian, she descended to the music room. It was still partially illuminated, and the servants were extinguishing the lights and removing the things. The chevalier was walking up and down with a rapid pace.

When Imogen appeared, the domestics retired; and the chevalier advancing, took her hand, and led her to a seat.

"I should apologize," said he, "for

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" so unseasonable an intrusion, and must " thank you for this kind accedence to my " request."

" By no means," said Imogen, pressing the hand which held hers; " but I con- " fess I am anxious to learn the cause " which prompted it."

" It was requisite I should see you for " your own sake immediately, as to-mor- " row I am under the necessity of leaving " Paris."

" You, sir—to-morrow?"

" I have promised to accompany the " duke de Beauvilliers on his first day's " journey."

" The duke de Beauvilliers! does he " too leave Paris?"

" He sets off to-morrow to visit his re- " giment now stationed in Bretagne."— Imogen's heart sunk within her; the che- valier continued: " But the lateness of the " hour urges me to be brief and explicit. " You are the debtor of the marquis de

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" Sancy. There are no debts less ho-
" nourable, yet none that call for more
" punctuality, than those which are in-
" curred at a gaming table; and though
" the marquis de Sancy is what the world
" calls a man of honour; though France
" boasts not among her valiant sons a
" braver, or more loyal gentleman, yet
" is he not the man to whom a young, a
" beautiful, an unguarded woman; one
" too but—"

The chevalier paused abruptly.

" I do not perfectly understand you," said Imogen, equally hurt and surprised.

" Perhaps," said the chevalier, " I do
" not wish you should. Oh! very long
" may the sweet and modest simplicity of
" your nature, the unsuspecting guileless-
" ness of your heart, survive the resigna-
" tion of the manners, the habits, and
" the pursuits which once accompanied
" them."

Imogen felt the full force of this deli-

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cate rebuke; but she felt its justice, and dared not retort. She drooped her head on her shoulder, sighed, and was silent.

"Forgive me," said the chevalier, taking her hand; "but though I now cease "to obtrude on you the anxious solici- "tude of friendship, the tender warnings "of apprehensive affection, still my heart "bleeds in secret for you."

Imogen felt the hand he raised to his lips bathed with a tear; her own flowed copiously. Her broken spirits were sunk to the last degree of sadness and oppression; her long smothered emotions no longer brooked controul, and the various causes of her poignant distress rushed all at once over her agitated mind.

"God knows," said the chevalier, greatly moved, "I did not intend to awaken "(at this moment, at least) one painful "feeling. I came to you in the dear capa- "city of a friend: this purse contains the

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" sum you owe De Sancy; instantly can-
" cel the dangerous debt, and—"

Imogen, still holding the hand of De Sorville, sunk at his feet, and exclaimed, " I am not worthy of this excess of good-
" ness, for I have abused it; I am not
" worthy of this solicitude, for I have dis-
" regarded it; I am not worthy of this
" confidence, for I have deceived you.
" The duke de Beauvilliers—"

Imogen paused for breath. The chevalier gently raised her in his arms, and placing her by him, looked earnestly in her face, and said,

" The duke de Beauvilliers was known
" to you before you became his prisoner at
" Laon."

" God of heaven!—you know then?"

" I know nothing but what I learnt
" this night from the duke himself, when
" he left you. His confidence seemed
" the result of the fulness of an heart,

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" which I believe to be the seat of every " virtue."

Imogen trembled in every limb as she demanded, " And what did you learn " from him ?"

" That the vicissitudes of war, and the " spirit of romance, had brought him in " the disguise of a minstrel to the chateau " de Montmorell, where you were a resi- " dent : but that afterwards considering it " as a boyish adventure, he had requested " you to conceal the circumstance."

The tears which gushed from her eyes dried on the burning cheek of Imogen, and she indignantly repeated, " As such " only it has held a place in my recollec- " tion ; but trivial as it was, it ought not " to have been concealed from you."

" Oh ! Imogen," said the chevalier, " why dare you not be always yourself " —with such an heart—with such a " mind!"

Then tenderly embracing her, he men-

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tioned the day of his return, and took his leave.

For a considerable time after the departure of De Sorville, Imogen continued in the spot where he had left her. The fluctuation of her thoughts had now subsided into one predominant idea, that the duke in his recent conversation with her had endeavoured to touch on the springs of her feelings, merely to become master of the sentiments by which they were still influenced; and that whatever had been the result of his political investigation, he had endeavoured to make her acquainted with his through the medium of the chevalier de Sorville.

"He wishes me to consider all that has "hitherto passed between us as the ef- "fects of a youthful and transient pro- "pensity," said she: "in the recently "experienced feelings of a husband, in "the sober affections of a parent, he has "long resigned even the recollection of

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" those glowing and impassioned senti-
" ments which once filled his heart and
" imagination; he supposes he still traces
" in my breast the lingering flame he first
" illumined, and he would endeavour, in
" pity, to chill its ardour by the commu-
" nication of his own coldness. Oh! in
" that thought there is madness—to love,
" and in return to be but pitied; to sup-
" pose an heart like mine could harbour
" an unparticipated sentiment, could still
" beat with the pulse of tenderness, when
" no kindred pulsation awakened its throb!
" Ah! he knows not that heart;—but
" should he remain, should he return hi-
" ther, he shall awaken from the dream
" into which his vanity, rather than his
" reason, has lulled him."

The entrance of a servant, who came to extinguish the lights, roused Imogen from her train of reverie. She arose, and retired to her apartment; but not to rest: for never had the novice of St. Dominick,

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in her narrow cell and on her straw mattress, passed so sleepless a night as did the countess of St. Dorval on her couch of down, surrounded by every lure to sweeten and invite repose.

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CHAP. XXXIII.

Nous errons dans des epaisses ombres
Et souvent nos lumieres sombres,
Ne servent qu'a nous eblouir.

J. B. ROUSSEAU.

" Slander beside her like a magpie chatters
" With envy (spitting cat), dread foe to peace."

THE next morning Imogen arose, without one pleasurable expectation smiling at her heart: weary of the world, but more weary of herself; lost to the esteem of him by whom she was beloved; deserted by him to whom, though almost unconscious of her tender weakness, she still clung; denied those enjoyments after which her soul panted; borne away by those pursuits from which she derived no pleasure; languid and dispirited, she sat down to her

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solitary breakfast, but arose without touching any thing; and placing herself at her escrutoire, began a billet to the marquis de Sancy, which she meant to accompany with the purse presented to her by the chevalier. But her thoughts were wandering, and while one hand supported her drooping head, the other held a pen suspended over the paper. From this intrusive train of reverie Imogen was awakened by an uncommon noise; while amidst the loud tones of a man's voice, the shrill intreaties of a female's were discernible. The study in which she sat opened into the hall from whence this noise proceeded: Imogen rang her bell, and a servant appeared; on inquiring into the disturbance, she was informed that it was a person whom the steward had turned out of his room for being importunate, and who now refused to depart without seeing the countess herself.

"And why was the person refused?"

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demanded Imogen, "when had you orders "to deny me to any one?"

"So please you, my lady," returned the laquais, "it is not a petitioner, else I "should not have refused—but a person "to whom some money is due. Your "orders are to refer such people to the "steward."

"Admit the person, however," said Imogen, with a faint blush glowing on her cheek.

The man opened the door, and ushered in a female of wan and wretched appearance, with a little boy in either hand; with an air of meekness and timidity, which appeared to have succeeded to a temporary flash of spirit, she courtesied low, while Imogen advancing took one of the children by the hand, and kindly inquired into the nature of the stranger's business with her, while she presented her a chair, and sat down beside her. The woman seemed touched by this goodness even to tears,

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and after a momentary struggle with her feelings, said,

"Lady, this is more than I deserve: "but necessity—the suffering of those we "love—an helpless family—will urge one "to act in a manner they afterwards blush "for. I knew too if I could once, only "once see you, lady, the debt would be "discharged, and my poor husband li- "berated."

"And am I your husband's debtor?" demanded Imogen.

"My husband is the person who fur- "nished the silk hangings for your house, "lady; when he received your orders, he "was but just recovering from some heavy "losses in trade; the silk, with the gold "and silver embroidery, he got on credit. "He often called on your steward, but "was always denied; at last he was ar- "rested for the money himself. For six "weeks he has lingered in prison under "a slow fever; while my children call for

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" bread, I have not to give them; your " steward has put me off from day to day, " and this morning added insolence to " denial."

The woman wept—but wept not alone. Imogen's heart was full, and her eyes overflowed: she snatched the children in her arms, placed them at the breakfast table, helped them abundantly to every thing it contained; then running to the escrutoire, took the purse intended for De Sancy, and inquired from the woman how much she was indebted to her. The sum specified was about three parts of what the purse contained; Imogen counted it out to the woman, then presented a piece of gold to each of the children. The woman looked at the money, then at Imogen; but did not, could not, speak. Imogen, kindly laying her hand on her's, said,

" Do not be surprised at a common act " of justice: the money so long due to " you I have now paid; but I must for

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" ever be your debtor for the sufferings I " have unconsciously caused you."

The woman dropt on one knee, kissed the beautiful hand that rested on her arm, then raised her eyes to heaven; the tear which bathed them was no longer of sorrow, but thanksgiving, and the smile that illumined her countenance was the language of joy, too great to be expressed. Then rising, she took a child in each hand, and departed in silence.

" If," said Imogen, looking after the little group, " an act of common justice " can awaken so sweet a feeling in the " heart, who can speak the peace and hap- " piness of that life which requires no act " of reparation?—De Sorville, that heaven " is thine."

Imogen had not time to indulge in the opposite reflections which this little incident awakened, when a servant announced a gentleman by the name of De Marville; and Imogen recognised in the person of an

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elegant looking young man, habited in a military dress, her faithful friend, Theodore of Montmorell. He entered the room in visible agitation, and when Imogen, advancing with an air of affectionate cordiality, extended her hand towards him, he received it with one knee touching the ground, and pressed it respectfully to his lips. His presence awakened too many interesting recollections to leave her wholly unaffected, and Theodore seemed intoxicated with his obviously sympathising participation.

"Ah! madam," he exclaimed, "you "are still then the same; the same good-"ness, the same condescension, the same "unaffected graces accompany the exalted "rank of the countess de St. Dorval, as "distinguished the meek humility of the "novice of St. Dominick."

"And you, Theodore," said Imogen with a smile, "are the same *preux chevalier*, "the same flatterer, as when you used to

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" study the annals of knight-errantry in " the antique turrets of Montmorell."

" Those were happy times," said Theodore:—" and yet," he added, with a sigh, " I was not as sensible of my felicity as I " should have been, as I should be now " were I again so fortunate."

The young page paused abruptly, and coloured; and Imogen, who felt the awkwardness of the pause, endeavoured to induce him to speak on the more recent circumstances of his life, but the generous conduct of the duke de Beauvilliers had rendered his adventures few, and his destiny fortunate. In endeavouring, therefore, to recapitulate the few incidents which had occurred to him since they parted, he pronounced only a panegyric on his illustrious patron, whom he dignified with every virtue, and adorned with every grace which ennobles or refines human nature.

This was a dangerous, a pleasing, and yet a painful theme, on which the greedy

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ear of Imogen could for ever feed; while, as she listened, she silently exclaimed, "Alas! these virtues, these perfections "live not for me."

Theodore also mentioned the late duchess de Beauvilliers; but with such reserve, that Imogen could only learn from him that she was young, gay, and handsome: while she remarked that he delicately avoided making the least reference to the duke's former disguise, and residence at the chateau de Montmorell.

After a visit of considerable length, the page arose to retire, but Imogen would not part with him until he promised to dine with her the following day.

She had always meditated a liberal recompense for Theodore, for the material services she had received from him; and as she had learned from his conversation that he only now held the commission of lieutenant in the army, she determined on procuring him either by purchase or in-

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terest a company. The person most likely to assist her in the latter was De Sancy, as colonel of the Swiss guards, and to him she determined to apply as soon as she had discharged his debt: but the purse, almost empty, lay on the table, and in the perturbation of her spirits the preceding night she had forgotten to inquire whether the chevalier had received the money from her steward, or advanced it himself. She rung the bell, and ordered the steward to be sent for. When he appeared, she demanded if he could let her have the sum requisite to cancel her debt to De Sancy? the man smiled.

"So please you, my lady," said he, "I could not let you have the twentieth "part of it. Monsieur le chevalier came "to me late last night for that sum in "your name, and I had not a sequin to "give him."

Imogen sat petrified.

The man continued: "One would need

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" to be as rich as twenty Jews to answer
" the demands of all the cravers that at-
" tack one from morning to night."

" I shall write to my agent in Provence
" this moment," said Imogen, " for a
" large sum. Mean time do not add in-
" solence to disappointment, and let those
" at least meet civility whose just claims
" remain unsatisfied."

She then dismissed the steward, and with a heavy heart sat down and wrote two letters; the one of apology to the marquis de Sancy, requesting his indulgence until she could hear from her Provençal agent; the other of the most pressing nature to the agent himself.

Imogen was not sufficiently versed in the manners and habits of the great world, not deeply to feel the delicacy of her situation with respect to De Sancy. Her proud and haughty spirit had not yet acquired that elasticity which can bend to circumstance or interest, and the note

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which she dispatched to De Sancy was dewed with a tear of indignant pride. She trembled for the return of the chevalier, since she could not explain to him the cause of De Sancy being yet her creditor, without relating the story of the poor woman, whose children were starving, and whose husband was a prisoner, by her wilful extravagance, and total neglect of her affairs.

But in the midst of this train of unpleasant cogitations, the door opened, and unannounced the chevalier himself appeared, followed by the duke de Beauvilliers. The tear of her wounded pride had not yet dried in the eye of Imogen, and surprise flushed her cheek, and increased her agitation to the most obvious excess.

"This is an unexpected visit, I believe," said De Sorville, affectionately kissing her hand, while the duke made a low and cold bow; "but not to conceal my triumphs "from you, I have effected what all the

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" beauties in Paris could not—I have pre-
" vailed on the duke to postpone his visit
" to Bretagne until we set off for Pro-
" vence."

Imogen started—*We*, she mentally repeated. Never had the chevalier spoken with so little reserve of their union, even in private, and to herself.

" In about three weeks," he continued with a smile, " your letter of licence will
" expire."

Imogen, who knew he alluded to the three months allotted by her father's will for her residence at Paris, faintly answered, " I believe it will."

" Suppose," said the chevalier, addressing the duke, " that you, my lord, instead
" of visiting the chill regions of Bretagne,
" return with us to the genial clime of
" Provence."

" I am by no means so atmospherical a
" being," said the duke, laughing, " as
" to be deterred by an icicle, or induced

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" by a sun-beam, to relinquish one journey
" or engage in another. The tepid gales
" and glowing skies of Provence have now
" no charms for me; mere situation has
" seldom governed my wandering. So-
" ciety is the polar star by which I steer
" my course; and had Elysium itself no
" other boast than living streams and ama-
" ranthine bowers, I should find greater
" attraction in the social haunts, but less
" picturesque scenes, of Mahomet's pa-
" radise. At present the literary hemi-
" sphere of England glitters with resplen-
" dant stars; and as soon as I realize your
" prudential theories, my dear chevalier,
" I shall fly to those attic circles where
" nobility struggles to obtain the bays,
" and loyalty* itself disdains not to braid
" its diadem with the laurel."

The duke then mentioned several men

* An allusion, perhaps, to the authorship of Elizabeth and her successor.

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of distinguished rank in England, who wooed the muses; dwelt with peculiar interest on the character of his friend, lord Brook,* and repeated a few of his amatory verses, which breathed all the warmth of a true Anacreontic spirit. Thus, with the literary enthusiasm of a man of letters, and the elegant suavity of a man of the world, the duke continued to converse until he arose to take his leave, which he performed with the *non-chalante* air of an indifferent acquaintance.

Not so Imogen:—her full heart had with difficulty controlled, with difficulty disguised its feelings; her attention to the really interesting topics discussed by the duke and De Sorville, was constantly distracted; her remarks incoherent, and her

* This accomplished nobleman and charming poet ordered this simple epitaph to be fixed on his grave:—"Servant to queen Elizabeth, counsellor to king James, "and friend to sir Philip Sidney."

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air perturbed and restless; while her eyes, now pensively fastened on the earth, now hid in her veil, were every moment moistening with intrusive tears.

De Sorville loitered behind his friend, and Imogen, trembling lest he should revert to the still uncancelled debt of De Sancy, endeavoured to engage his attention by making her recent interview with Theodore the subject of their conversation; by recapitulating the material services she had received from him; and by requesting his advice with respect to the mode she should adopt to obtain for him some military promotion, the only kind of recompence it was probable his delicacy would receive.

"The marquis de Sancy," said the chevalier, "is the person who could ma-
"terially serve you in this business, and
"as you are now out of his debt, you
"might without any impropriety apply to
"him."

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Imogen blushed deeply, and the chevalier added with a smile,

"But I believe you had better leave the "whole matter to me; I am at least the "safest, if not the best, person to whom "you can make a request, and without "any interest myself, I think I have sufficient influence with those who have, to "make a captain of our little page: so "pray invite him to meet me here to-morrow at dinner, that I may get a peep at "your *protegée*, and you shall present "him with a commission as a *bon bouche*."

"But how, how is this to be effected?" demanded Imogen, eagerly.

"Oh! leave that to me," replied De Sorville, gaily; "but remember, I stipu-"late for no *primero* for a week." He then turned the conversation to the duke de Beauvilliers. "I suppose," said he, "you have heard that the cause of the "duke's absence from Fontainbleau was "the death of his infant son, who expired

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" a few days back in the arms of his grand-
" mother, the duchess de V— ; on whose
" bosom indeed it has been dying since its
" birth. The duke has therefore been
" prepared for its loss almost from the
" moment he possessed it: yet I should
" fancy the secret regret it awakened in-
" fluenced his sudden determination of
" flying from Paris, in whose gaieties he
" now seems so little to participate. With
" all his superior sense," continued the chevalier, after a moment's pause, which Imogen had not the power to fill up, " the,
" duke is still, I fear, too much the sport
" of impulse and ardent sensibility, and
" still retains much of that boyish romance
" of character which led him in the hum-
" ble disguise of a minstrel to the portals
" of the chateau de Montmorell. I had
" much difficulty in persuading him to
" give up his unnecessary journey, at a
" moment when his absence from court
" might be highly injurious to him, as

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" 'tis rumoured the king means to appoint
" him to some elevated situation in the
" military line: but his disinterested fa-
" vourite seems to value more the friend-
" ship of the amiable man, than the power
" of the mighty monarch. He is indeed
" of a noble generous nature; guided by
" a sense of honour, almost romantic, he
" has always sacrificed his interest, and
" sometimes perhaps his happiness, to its
" refined dictates; and wholly influenced
" by a spirit, lofty, dignified, and inde-
" pendant, neither the lure of ambition,
" nor the views of interest, have obtained
" the least power over his heart or con-
" duct, in an age when not to appear
" venal and selfish is almost to incur the
" imputation of hypocrisy."

Imogen, profoundly touched by the eulogium of De Beauvilliers flowing from the lips of De Sorville, agitated and silent, was unable to make any reply. The chevalier seemed not to expect one; for

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taking up his hat, and apparently not observing her emotion, he kissed her hand, and took his leave.

A confusion of ideas, of sensations, for a short interval absorbed the mind of Imogen, and set any one object of reflection at defiance. Her perplexed and varying thoughts at last dwelt on the friendship and intimate intercourse which seemed to exist between De Beauvilliers and De Sorville; and to the heart of Imogen it now adduced the double inference, that the boundless confidence of De Sorville arose from his entertaining no suspicion of the attachment which once subsisted between his promised bride and his friend, and that the conduct of De Beauvilliers was the result of that attachment having in his heart long since faded into the chillest indifference. But in the faithful bosom of Imogen the rose of passion still bloomed; and though despondency had long since dewed it with many an icy tear, it still

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preserved its vital warmth. It was in vain she endeavoured to conceal from her own heart its hopeless love. It was in vain she endeavoured to believe she felt an indifference commensurate to that she had inspired; in spite of every effort, the idea of one object alone filled her whole soul, formed the spirit of her waking thought, animated the dream of her short repose, called forth the slumbering blisses of her heart, or gave existence to her new-born woes; and though in the pang which unrequited passion shot through her breast, all other ills seemed summed up in one, yet, in all the infatuation of tenderness, even to love without a hope seemed preferable to not loving at all. But though that sentiment which now formed part of her existence was not to be vanquished, the policy of pride taught her at least to endeavour to conceal it. Tortured by the conflicts of reason and inclination, of virtue and of love, the envied but unhappy

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countess de St. Dorval flung over her secret sufferings the gaudy veil of pleasure, and continued to deceive the world and herself, by feigning what she could not feel.

New and dangerous speculations for the institution of new pleasures, attended with boundless expence, were hourly put into practice; she became the foundress of amusements hitherto unthought of, and continued to take the lead in all those haunts of fashionable dissipation which her spirit was calculated to promote, and her wit to enliven. But in those temporary self-retirements which night and transient solitude bestowed, her mind, no longer on the stretch, yielded and dissolved to the touch of sad conviction; the flowery bandage then fell from her eyes, and shuddering she beheld herself on the brink of a precipice of error, whose yawning gulph seemed open to receive her. Then, terrified and contrite, she clung to the bosom

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of virtue for safety; but even then found not the happiness it had once bestowed.

Amidst the restless and agonizing feelings that chased the dove of peace from the breast of Imogen, one sweet consolatory reflection had insinuated itself; for she had the happiness to reward modest merit, and to repay in some degree a material obligation. Theodore had returned to his regiment in possession of a company, and with an heart filled with the liveliest gratitude, and a respectful tenderness bordering almost on idolatory for his benefactress. He had received from her hands the commission the interest of De Sorville had procured for him, accompanied by a beautiful diamond ring, which Imogen, with a smile that enhanced its value, placed herself on his finger. The page received both on his knees; then drawing from his bosom the little silver reliquary presented to him by the Novice

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of St. Dominick, he exclaimed in an impassioned tone,

"Nor is this the least precious of all "your munificent benefactions; Oh! ma- "dam, never has it, never shall it leave "the breast whose heart holds you as the "first object of its earthly reverence and "adoration."

Then kissing the hand held out to him, he implored a benediction on her head; and, overwhelmed by grateful emotions, agitated perhaps by warmer but not safer sentiments, he covered his face with his cloak, and rushed from her presence.

Meantime the marquis de Sancy had answered Imogen's apologetic note in person. He appeared seriously hurt that she should consider his trifling debt as an object of momentary uneasiness; assured her that a little deeper experience in the ways of the world would teach her to treat such trivial circumstances as they deserved; and

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as he should always consider his money safer in her hands than in his own, he begged to look on her as his banker, on whom he should make no ceremony to call when occasion urged him. Though the proud feelings of Imogen were in some degree soothed by the insidious address of her elegant creditor, and she began to see the matter in a new light from that in which the chevalier had painted it, yet she determined to cancel the debt the moment a letter from her Provençal agent afforded her the means.

Among the many who had sought to render themselves distinguished in the world of fashion, by their attention to the most popular object of fashionable celebrity, the duke de Montmorency, with the exception of the colonel of the Swiss guards, was the most pointed in his assiduities. Governed by the manners of the day, but almost ignorant of that laxity of morals which accompanied them, Imogen

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took no account of that homage paid to her by a married man, but merely looked on it as the result of general and professed gallantry.

No sooner, however, was a splendid entertainment announced to be held at the hotel de Montmorency, than it was universally reported to be given in honour of the lady de St. Dorval ;* though the duchess de Montmorency was anxious to have it generally believed it was meant to celebrate the christening of her infant son. Whatever was its cause, the expected fête now became the most general topic of fashionable discussion ; and twelve noblemen, whose magnificence and whose graces

* For an account of this entertainment, see Memoires de Duc de Sully, who believed it to be held in honour of a young lady who lately appeared at court. Even the gravity of the philosophic minister was not proof against the festivity of this ball, for he confesses to have performed himself in a ballet.

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would most contribute to the splendour and attractions of the entertainment, were selected by the duke to perform a grand ballet, according to the fashion of the times.

Imogen had already, among her numerous accomplishments, acquired great celebrity by her dancing, although she had hitherto but little opportunity of displaying her powers to their fullest extent in that elegant and fascinating art. Not unconscious, however, of the excellence she had attained to in the graces and sentiment of motion, she readily acceded to the request preferred by the duke and duchess de Montmorency, of arranging a ballet for the evening, to be performed by ladies distinguished for their beauty and their graces. Imogen selected for the occasion one of the most beautiful and interesting fables which the heathen mythology is enriched with, The Loves of

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Cupid and Psyche.* To the duchess de Montmorency she allotted the character of Proserpine, as equally adapted to the loveliness of her person, and the dignity of her deportment; the personification of Venus she gave to mademoiselle de Guise, whose charms might be truly said to rival the fabled charms of the Paphian deity; the sisters of Psyche, subtle, artful, and insinuating, were to be performed by the young ladies, D'Entragues and De Beuil; the son of the duke de Montmorency (by a former marriage), beautiful as Love himself, undertook to represent the wily God; and Psyche, the soul of bliss, the presiding deity of pleasure, was the character which Nature herself pointed out for the lady de St. Dorval to assume.

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* See "Lettres sur la Mythologie, addressés a Emilie "par M. de Mousteir," where this charming allegory is invested with new graces, and related in the happiest and most poetic style.

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The evening of expected festivity at length arrived. A variety of splendid entertainments succeeded to each other, each more attractive than that which had elapsed, till the Loves of Cupid and Psyche climaxed the gay succession of festive pleasures. The ladies de Montmorency, De Guise, D'Entragues, and De Beuil, appeared flushed with more than usual beauty; and though their performance had not merited the boundless applause bestowed upon it, yet had the rank and loveliness of the charming actresses obtained it. Yet still it was evident they only played the part as it had been taught them; they only sparkled with the beams borrowed from the refulgence of a superior light. But Imogen, Imogen alone was no actress. Having once fancied what she ought to feel, she soon felt all she had fancied; the inspirations of genius, of sensibility, once awakened, the identity of her

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own character vanished equally from herself and her delighted spectators. It was not the lady de St. Dorval who fascinated attention and awakened the most intense and breathless interest—it was Psyche! it was the Goddess of Pleasure herself, whose quick changing vicissitudes kept suspence on the eternal stretch. Through the almost impalpable drapery that flowed around her elastic form, the softened outline of every symmetric contour, the flushing tint of motion's glowing hue were now betrayed—were now concealed; while the rich, but aërial folds frolicked with the graceful play of every motion. Amidst the luxuriance of her golden tresses, the rosy braid of love entwined its blushing flowers; every tress exhaling a sigh of fragrance, every flower weeping with Olympian dew. Floating on the air, rather than touching the earth, like the goddess of beauty, her celestial movements rather

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than her form betrayed the divinity.* While, as in the varied course of her eventful story she glided through the successive transitions of feeling and emotion; now pale and drooping in the chilling languor of apathy; now revelling in ecstacy, breathing bliss and flushing roses; now the victim of imprudent curiosity, torn by remorse, and wild with despair; now the object of envy and malicious persecution, every where opposed, and every where vanquished;—the strained eye of wonder, of interest, of admiration, still pursued her mazy flight, until the delighted but wearied imagination reposed on the magnificent spectacle of her apotheosis; and Psyche, re-united to Love, and deified by Jove, took her place in Olympus as the Goddess of Pleasure.

Never had the charming deity seduced

* "Et vera incessu patuit Dea."
VIRG. Æneid. Lib. 1. line 410.

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to her shrine a more enthusiastic train of votarists than that which now surrounded her, while an endless echo was given to the plaudits of admiration which resounded on every side; and Imogen was almost literally, as well as metaphorically, deified; for in the midst of a little universe she beheld herself adored as omnipotent, and worshipped as divine. But if there had been eras in the life of Imogen, in which the ambition of superiority had been the ruling passion of the moment, it was only in the intervening slumbers of that sentiment, which, when awakened, absorbed every other, pervaded every sense, and animated every feeling, that sentiment which now formed the soul of her existence. She had begun her performance with a real languor, consonant to the fictitious apathy she should have assumed; when foremost in the ranks of the admiring crowd, for the first time during the entertainment, lofty and towering above

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all who surrounded him, conspicuous in form, pre-eminent in manly beauty, appeared the duke de Beauvilliers. Conforming to the festive spirit of the night, he appeared in a fictitious character, and personified the Genius of Minstrelsy; his eye beaming fire, flashed the enthusiastic raptures of his art; his lyre, crowned with laurels, diffused its sweetest powers. It was from the soul-dissolving strains of that lyre, the rapt Psyche stole her inspirations; it was in the glance of that eye she found her apotheosis. The plauditory acclamations of a world vibrated on her senses: but the look she sought, the look she received, sunk to her heart; then the world's murmur died on her ear, the world itself disappeared from her eye; and then she felt the immortality she had before but feigned. During the rest of the evening, the genius of minstrelsy hovered round the goddess of bliss, yet attempted not to address her—the spontaneous language of

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their souls had already spoken in the communion of a look.

Intoxicated by her triumph, Imogen at a late hour returned to the hotel de St. Dorval; and faint, weary, and exhausted, retired to bed, but not to rest. The fairy visions of the evening still floated in her fancy; but the conviction that she was still dear to him, the object of her secret devotion, revelled in her heart. That bosom chord, on which hung all her hopes and all her fears, now trembled to the thrilling touch of bliss, and in the sophistry of her sweet and flushing emotions she now fondly believed that a sentiment which could survive an everlasting separation from its object, invulnerably guarded by the chastest purity of virtue, the proudest dignity of honour, might be indulged even in an heart whose vow of duty was plighted to another. But this belief, dangerous as false, was founded only in her wishes: in reason, in truth, in prudence,

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it had no basis; and, like the lightning's flash, it blasted while it dazzled. Imogen was still too virtuous not to feel she ought to *hope* her love was *hopeless*; but she was still too tender not to rejoice it was returned, To virtue she was determined to sacrifice the happiness of her future life; but the transient beam of felicity which illumined the existing moment she had not the courage to exclude: the character the duke had assumed, convinced her his adventures at the chateau de Montmorell were still dear to his recollection; and that the poetic fragment, addressed to him by the novice of St. Dominick, had furnished him with the idea he had so elegantly realised.

On the following morning she arose, animated with the expectation of a crowd of complimentary visits from those who had made her the object of their devotion the preceding night, but still more by the hope of seeing him who had been the re-

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cret object of hers. Dressed in a simple, but elegant dishabille, she descended to the library, and took up the poems of the French Anacreon, Ronsard; for she now seldom read, save in the intervals of expected pleasure, or the languid pauses of expected society; when an uproar in the outward hall caught her attention, and she dispatched the page who waited in the anti-chamber to learn the cause: in a few minutes he returned, accompanied by the steward.

"So please you, my lady," exclaimed monsieur le Brun, apparently agitated by passion, "it is those vile mechanics, who "weary out one's patience and temper in "a manner that flesh and blood can't stand "them; so I ordered the tall Swiss porter to turn out half a dozen of them by "the shoulder, and shut the gates in their "face: but he had to struggle with the "refractory knaves, forsooth."

"And who are they? and what are their

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" demands?" asked Imogen, almost trembling as she inquired.

" Why first, my lady," replied monsieur le Brun, " there was Dubois, a cross-
" grained fellow as any in the kingdom,
" who furnished the hotel with wax tapers
" ever since my lady arrived in Paris,
" for which he never received a single
" sous."

" And why did he not, monsieur le
" Brun?"

" Because, my lady will please to recol-
" lect, the sum destined for him last week
" in part payment was, by my lady's good
" orders, presented to monsieur de Ser-
" vin, and no money has been paid in by
" the tenants since. Then there is monsieur
" Denis, who has furnished my lady's ta-
" ble with the choicest wines, and whose
" clerk now made such an uproar about
" never having being paid for a single
" flask, that, by the rood, I was near
" chucking him into the channel. Then

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" there is old farmer La Moissone, who, " though never clamorous, is more teazing " than them all, who has provided my lady's " menage during the whole winter; and " who makes so much ado about his cat- " tle being driven for rent, and his three " fatherless grand-children, and his broken- " hearted old wife, and the like nonsense. " And then, marry, comes monsieur le " Texier, as insolent as a duke forsooth, " because, notwithstanding all the money " he received from my lady, he has not " been paid for the state coach. And then " there is old Le Mercier, the clothier, who " furnished my lady's liveries and other " articles; and who, having become a " bankrupt, only sues for a trifle to sup- " port his wife and children till his affairs " are settled; and then—"

" No more, no more, I intreat," exclaimed Imogen in a tone of agony; and rising in great perturbation, she added, " You have been greatly, greatly to blame,

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" monsieur le Brun, to let these debts ac-
" cumulate."

" And what was my lady's poor steward
" to do?" demanded monsieur le Brun, with a bow and a shrug, accompanied with the utmost *sang-froid*; " the money came
" in slow and went out fast, and my lady
" must have her house provided like that
" of other people of fashion."

" In what time do you think I may
" expect an answer from my Provençal
" agent?" asked Imogen, as with an hurried step she paced the room.

" Why, I think, my lady, if your courier
" does not play the truant, you may ex-
" pect an answer in a few days."

" And in the interim, monsieur le Brun,
" what is to be done with these poor
" people?"

" Why, so please you, my lady, I have
" a friend who lends money upon inter-
" est, and who would give you any sum

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" you might immediately require, on your " bond."

This was a language Imogen did not understand: she begged of the steward to explain what he meant; but even his plausive definition could not reconcile her to borrowing money on any terms from a stranger; and her pride, united to her total ignorance of worldly matters, saved her from taking a step against which neither her reason nor fine understanding would have afforded her any protection. Besides she dared not enter into any engagement unknown to De Sorville, and she trembled to give him any insight into the deranged state of her affairs, which since she had come of age he had not enquired into. She therefore decisively rejected the offer of her artful and over-reaching steward. Having insisted that he should pacify by kindness, rather than irritate by insolence, her importunate cre-

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ditors, until she should receive money from Provence, she dismissed him.

He had scarcely left the room when mademoiselle d'Entragues entered it. The presence of her gay friend operated like a spell on the drooping spirits of Imogen, who eagerly seizing occasion to shake off the goading intrusion of awakened conscience, reverted to the pleasures of the preceding evening, and anxiously expected a recapitulation of those triumphs her flattering friend seemed always delighted to detail; and, with a smile of gay expectation, she exclaimed,

"Well, my charming oracle, my lovely "Pythia, what says this prating world to-"day of new or pleasant? what says the "gossip fame of Psyche and her fair at-"tendant graces?—ah! a sigh!—that is "an unfavourable omen."

"And when omens were unfavourable," returned mademoiselle d'Entragues, embracing Imogen tenderly, "was not the

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" Delphic priestess excused from giving " an answer?"

" Yes," said Imogen, with affected pleasantry, " to those who had not the cou- " rage to bear the disappointment of their " hopes: but we who sacrificed so largely " to Apollo last night, may surely expect " the laurel crown this morning."

" You at least deserved it," said mademoiselle d'Entragues, " but merit and " success are not always concomitant."

" For heaven's sake what does all this " lead to?" demanded Imogen, in a tone of timid apprehension and impatience.

" Why, that you are the most highly " gifted, the most amiable, but the most " injured of all human beings," returned her friend; " but do not press me to be " more explicit."

" I must, I will press you," replied Imogen, eagerly; " suspense is the only suf- " fering in which all temper, all patience

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" forsakes me—in mercy to my feelings
" then be explicit."

" Alas!" exclaimed mademoiselle d'Entragues, " in mercy to your feelings I " should be silent, but I can deny you " nothing. You must know then, my " charming friend, I am but just returned " from the Eglise de St. Denis; never was " there seen a more splendid congregation; the king and all the court attended " matins; the archbishop of Paris celebrated high mass, and the sermon was " preached by the famous Pere Justin. " The duchess de Beaufort, who is preparing for her Easter devotions, came " and departed in royal state: her litter, " surrounded by a captain's guard, though " all the princesses were in carriages, " stopped up the way for a considerable " time, so as a large groupe of us stood " waiting for our equipages in the north " chancel. The chit-chat of the moment " rambled from the eloquence of the

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" Pere Justin, to the new fardingale à-la-
" Beaufort; from the splendour of the fair
" Gabrielle, to the dignified graces of the
" archbishop; and from the miracles of
" St. Denis to the magnificent festin of
" the duke de Montmorency. This, of
" course, brought your name in question.
" And where, (said Du Fresne, the king's
" chamberlain, addressing me,) where is
" your little Circe countess this morning;
" why is she not here to expiate by prayer
" and penance her sins of commission
" last night?—Sins enough, o' my con-
" science (muttered the old governess of
" the household, as she stood counting
" her beads and fulminating slander); a
" fine example, truly, for our daughters
" and grand-daughters. I thank my stars
" I have never seen her in one of her
" Circe-like paroxysms; but they say no
" modest woman could look at her danc-
" ing last night without blushing to death.
" Christ! when such profligacy is toler-

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" ated by people of the most distinguished
" rank!—Aye! indeed, (echoed the old
" and deaf lady d'Uzes, plaiting in the
" formal folds of her stiff ruff,) but I be-
" lieve this new-created countess has not
" always been confined to private exhibi-
" tions of her talents: for a certain person
" said the other evening at the king's
" chapel, during vespers, that he had ac-
" tually seen the lady de St. Dorval at the
" Teatro de Medicis at Florence.—What!
" (said the lady de Noirmontier,) as a
" stage dancer?—Nay, I say nought, (re-
" turned the old lady d'Uzes, with a
" sneer,) but I believe we all remarked
" last night how closely she resembled in
" all her movements those new importa-
" tions it was the king's good pleasure to
" bring over from Italy, to exhibit at the
" Arsenal. Aye, folk are never satisfied;
" things were thought to be at their
" worst in the days of Francis the First;
" but I say nothing.—Well, well, (said

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" the young De Rosni,*) be this fair mys-
" terious countess who and what she may,
" had I a thousand hearts I would have
" laid them at her feet last night, for she
" looked, and moved, and danced like a
" divinity.—Yes, of the Cyprian order,
" added your *protegée*, De Servin; upon
" which there was a general laugh.—For
" my part, (said I, infinitely provoked at
" their malice,) I believe the greatest
" fault we can attribute to the countess de
" St. Dorval is her superiority over our-
" selves.—Oh! she is your Phœnix! (re-
" torted the withered lady de Sauvés, rais-
" ing her demure eyes from her breviary,)
" and indeed I believe her equal is not to
" be found.—Except (added De Servin)
" among the accomplished Almea of an
" Egyptian harem, the Baladieres of In-
" dia, or the dancing girls of a Turkish

* Brother to the duc de Sully.

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" seraglio. Here there was another ge-
" neral laugh again; and a thousand sar-
" casms on the lightness of your new in-
" vented drapery, the levity of your man-
" ners, your disregard of public opinion,
" and your general neglect of decorum
" and propriety, were bandied about by
" those who think vice is sanctioned by
" the bulwark of a fardingale, and inno-
" cence shameless when veiled in an airy
" robe. What rendered the whole affair
" doubly insupportable to me was, that I
" observed the chevalier de Sorville and
" the duke de Beauvilliers among the
" crowd."

" And did they? did they—?" faulter-ed Imogen, with trembling lips and tear-ful eyes; but choaked by emotion, she could not ask what she died to know.

" Oh! they certainly must have said
" something in your exculpation," re-joined mademoiselle d'Entragues; " but
" the buz and murmur was so great, and

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" they stood at such a distance from me,
" I could not distinguish what they said ;
" and, disgusted with the malice and envy
" of this odious world, I ordered my car-
" riage, and hurried away."

Mademoiselle d'Entragues then endeavoured to give another turn to the conversation, and talked of some new publications which had just appeared: but as Imogen, agitated, thoughtful, and silent, made no replication but by a half-stifled sigh or an intrusive tear, mademoiselle d'Entragues, without appearing to notice her emotion, tenderly embraced her, and took her leave.

The bitterest feeling of disappointment, of mortification, of wounded pride, and offended delicacy, had now reached its climax in the bosom of Imogen. " And
" is this then," she exclaimed in an agony of tears, " is this the world which has so
" long been the goal of my desires; which
" my fancy peopled with visions of unfad-

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" ing pleasure, and that my heart sought
" with fondness, in the vain belief that
" within its social circle I should meet
" with many a gentle, many a generous
" spirit, to mingle and associate with mine,
" in all the warm and pure endearments
" of sympathy and friendship? But who
" sympathises in the ardent glowing feel-
" ings of *my* soul? who participates in
" the friendship I am so ready to feel?"

The conduct of De Servin then rushed to her mind, more conspicuous by his ingratitude than the rest of her defamers by their wanton malice: that man, whom her praise had rendered popular, whom her bounty had supported, and her benevolence relieved from those distresses incurred by those follies her charity induced her to lament and extenuate, in favour of those better qualities she believed accompanied them; he it was who stepped forward from amidst the inconsequent and slanderous crowd, to throw with the sportive hand of

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wit the poisoned shaft of malicious defamation, and turn those brilliant talents against his generous benefactress which her taste had discovered, and her liberality rewarded. Imogen, amidst her own individual sufferings, felt an additional pang in considering that the greatest gift it has pleased heaven to lavish on man, genius, might be found associated with the blackest vice of which human nature is capable, ingratitude! Her fluctuating and unhappy thoughts then flowed towards the primary source of her recent mortification; and she now felt, for the first time, the danger of innovation in those reigning modes which time and custom had rendered respectable, even though experience and truth had proved them erroneous; and that singularity in opinion, manners, or appearance, however sanctioned by reason or approved by taste, must always render the individual who adopts it the object of popular opposition; since its very

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adoption is a tacit contempt of those established forms which popular prejudice holds as sacred. Convinced of the insatiable malice with which envy ever pursues supposed or real superiority, she now almost lamented the possession of those acquirements which rendered her the object of its peculiar persecution; and almost panted to possess that common-place mind of humble mediocrity, which, unconscious of those powers that awaken ambition, or attract the shaft of envy, steals through life in sober tranquillity, equally free from censure or applause.

"Alas!" she exclaimed, "how much "more respectable does the character of "the coldly amiable madame de Rose-"mont now appear than that of the flat-"tered, but condemned, lady de St. Dor-"val! And yet that woman, now almost "the object of my envy, was once the "object of my compassion, if not of my "contempt."

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At that moment the lady de Rosemont was herself announced, and Imogen had scarcely wiped her last-shed tear from her cheek, when the subject of her cogitation entered. Madame de Rosemont had come merely to bid farewel to her young friend: anxious, she said, to return to her favourite residence, the chateau de Rosemont, she had seized on the opportunity of a nobleman and his family going to Picardy to accompany them, and intended to leave Paris the ensuing morning. She addressed Imogen with a warmth and cordiality unusual to her; pressed her not to delay her brother's happiness, by unnecessary protraction; talked with some degree of energy on the extreme delicacy of her situation; and kissing away the tear that stole down Imogen's cheek when she arose to depart, she exclaimed in a tone of pity and affection, "That, that world, for "which alone she lived, was unworthy of "her."

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This kindness and solicitude, expressed by one from whom perhaps she neither expected nor felt she deserved it, touched Imogen to the heart; while in the last equivocal assertion of madame de Rosemont she perceived a lurking, delicate hint of the light in which that unworthy world now beheld her. Inconsequent as she had hitherto considered the character of her phlegmatic friend, she now looked on the loss of her matronly sanction and respectable society as a source of real regret; and with a mind bowed down by mortification, and spirits depressed beyond the power of revival, from the successive and unpleasant incidents of the morning, she left orders to be denied to all who might call on her during the rest of the day; anxious to conceal from the world those agonizing feelings, whose poignancy its ingratitude and malice had roused. She again resumed her book; but her taste for such calm and sober pur-

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suits was fled. She sat down to her harp, and arose from it in disgust: "To what "purpose," said she, "continue to cul- "tivate talents which have proved the bane "of my peace?"

She spent the rest of the day, therefore, in restless agitation, walking through those sumptuous and magnificent apartments, where every splendid article of furniture gave a silent reproach to her sensitive conscience. In the evening she called for her porter's book; she found in it the name of every man of rank and fashion in Paris, except that of the duke de Beauvilliers, the only name whose absence could have cost her a sigh; but no female visitors appeared on the list, save the duchess de Guise and her daughter, who left a card written with a pencil, intimating her intention of leaving Paris early the next morning. This was what Imogen expected; for she knew that the irregularities of the count de Joinville, the duchess's youngest son, had

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induced his amiable mother to follow him into one of the provinces, whither, under the displeasure of the king, and self-exiled, he had gone to prosecute his schemes of vicious dissipation unmolested.

The absence of the duchess Imogen felt more at this moment than she would have done at any other, and involuntarily pressing her kind card to her lips, she exclaimed, "All my best friends are deserting me "—and yet not all," she added, taking up a note from the chevalier de Sorville. The billet was simply an enquiry after her health, and expressive of a hope that indisposition had not been the preventive to his seeing her. She, gladly seizing the hint, returned an immediate answer, and pleaded fatigue and a violent head-ache as the cause of her confinement.

In the course of those reflections which occupied the mind of Imogen during the rest of the day, a new train of ideas gradually usurped the place of those unplea-

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sant and mortifying feelings in which she had at first indulged. Merit and envy she considered as concomitants; since to possess the one, was the magnetic spell to invariably attract the other. She blamed herself for being influenced by the gossip prattle of a few prejudiced and illiberal persons, and felt that the slanderous reports her conduct had given rise to, were rather the result of obvious merit than violated decorum. To soar above the multitude, to hold some distinguished place in society, had long been the most ardent of her desires:—she had obtained it.

"And am I now," she proudly exclaimed, "to bend beneath those exertions "which malicious dulness and envying "stupidity are making to reduce me to "their own level?—No, I will teach them "that though envy loves a lofty mark, "it may reach—but cannot pierce it."

Led on by this delusive sophistry, with which the vanity or the ambition of youth

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so frequently sanctifies its errors, the next day her doors were again thrown open to the giddy, the dissipated, the unprincipled, to fashionable folly, to witty vice, and dissolute rank. Her morning circle was only graced by the presence of two ladies, madames de Beuil and d'Entragues: but never had her levee been more crowded by gentlemen.

The duke de Montmorency was more than usually gallant, and the marquis de Sancy so pointed in his assiduities, as almost to distance every other claimant on her courted attention. She had just taken up her lute, and begun a pathetic little cantata of her own composition, while De Sancy in apparent ecstacy hung over the back of her chair, when the chevalier de Sorville, accompanied by the duke de Beauvilliers, entered the room. Imogen bowed her head, and attempted to continue her song; but her voice trembled, and her fingers produced only discords

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Endeavouring to do away her apparent confusion, she abruptly dropt her pensive strain, and struck into a comic roundelay of exquisite melody, which she executed with peculiar point and humour. The room rung with applause; and she presented the lute to De Sancy.

"No," said he, putting it aside, "I "dare not touch the instrument, except "you have left some of your magic on "the strings; for with me the superiority "of your genius always counteracts the "inspiration of your smiles, although, "like the breath of Venus, they give to "every object on which they fall an ani-"mating power, which raises it above its "ordinary condition."

"A refusal so couched," said Imogen, smiling, "is at any time worth an acce-"dance less gallantly granted: but if you "cannot be amusive, you must at least be "useful."—And she threw a skain of golden twist over his hands, which she

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gracefully and dextrously wound off on a little ivory reel that lay beside her on her embroidery frame. The men all complained of this enviable monopoly; while De Sancy repaid the condescension which conferred it with a thousand little elegant and playful gallantries.

Meantime the chevalier and the duke stood conversing with the high constable, at the further end of the room, while their eyes were fixed on Imogen, who was indulging in a number of graceful and whimsical caprices, which at once displayed the pleasantry of her humour, the fertility of her wit, and the variety of her talents. The chevalier de Sorville at last approached her, and in a voice almost audible, said,

"From your note of yesterday, I almost expected to have found you alone to-day; instead of which—" and he paused abruptly.

"Instead of which," said Imogen, faintly blushing at the dictatorial manner of

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the chevalier, " instead of which you find " me, as I should always wish to be found, " in the *midst of my friends.*"

The chevalier shook his head, and as he seated himself by her he demanded in a low voice, " Is flattery and friendship " then synonymous?"

" You have taught me to know they " are not?" said Imogen, pointedly; " but though the cup of friendship is a " most sanative and nourishing draught, " yet I must confess a little of the essence " of the delicate spirit of flattery would " not render it less vivifying or delicious: " but by flattery I only mean to express " pleasant truths."

" I believe," said the chevalier, drily, " there are some heads so inebriated and " weakened by the fumes of flattery, as " to be unable to support the plain but " wholesome potion the hand of friend- " ship presents; for the lip which is em- " bued with the luscious beverage of the

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" former, turns revoltingly from the un-
" qualified draught of the latter."

Here the marquis de Sancy, released from his office, and playing with the cross of St. Louis that hung at his bosom, with a significant air was walking away, when Imogen exclaimed,

" Come back, my lord de Sancy; assist
" me to argue this point with the chevalier.
" Come, and oppose your philosophy to
" his; for you are both philosophers," she playfully added, " though of different
" sects: he sometimes draws his precept
" from the cynic tub of Diogenes—but
" you always steal yours from the trans-
" parent vase of Epicurus: his motto is,
" Forbear."

" And mine," exclaimed the elated De Sancy, " Enjoy!"

" Virtue, and no pleasure," continued Imogen, " is the chevalier's maxim—but
" virtue united to pleasure is ours; for I
" profess myself your disciple."

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"And is virtue the agent or the object," demanded the chevalier pointedly, "in "your philosophy?"

"Both," said Imogen, stung to the quick by the manner in which this question was demanded: "for there can be no "pleasure independent of virtue, though "you may convince us there can be virtue "without pleasure."

The chevalier bowed, and remained silent. The keenest retort would have been more supportable than the mild tranquillity with which he received this little sarcasm. Imogen's heart smote her; the sensibility of her disposition, equally alive to kindness or to unkindness, the warmth of her irritable feelings, and the vivacity of her temper, had hurried her away beyond those boundaries her modest, affectionate, and unoffending nature had hitherto prescribed. Self-accused, self-condemned, she sunk back upon her seat, from which a moment before she had abruptly risen, her

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cheek blushing at the unguarded sally of her temper, and her eyes expressive of the humility of her present feelings.

At that moment she encountered the eyes of the duke de Beauvilliers; but no faint spark of lingering passion, no beam of sympathy illumined their glance, it expressed but one sentiment, and that sentiment was pity. Imogen spoke no more. The conversation, though general, was now languid and uninteresting. Her visitors one by one dropt away: the chevalier was the first to depart, the duke de Beauvilliers the last. He had outstayed every other except mademoiselle de Beuil; and her excessive garrulity rendered his pensive silence scarcely obvious.

She at last arose to retire, and presented him her hand to conduct her to her carriage. With an evident reluctance he received it; and when he took his leave, there was a lingering anxiety in his air, that betrayed his wish to remain.

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Imogen, who had endeavoured hitherto to conceal the nature and repress the violence of her feelings, now gave them boundless scope; she saw, she felt she was not only an object of indifference to De Beauvilliers, but of pity, perhaps of contempt. The vivacity she had lately assumed was only the result of her desire to conceal from public observation the strong emotions his presence had inspired; and now which ever way she cast her hopeless eyes, mortification and disappointment met their glance. While the tears stole down her burning cheeks, while sighs of anguish convulsed her bosom, Beatrice rushed into the room, holding in her hands the broken fragments of an alabaster casket: flurried and confused she endeavoured to exculpate herself from the accident which had happened, by ascribing it to the carelessness of one of the filles-de-chambres, who in brushing out a cabinet where it stood had thrown it down. She then laid it, with

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the papers it had contained, on the table before Imogen; and observing that her lady appeared not to hear one syllable of her apology, and that her attention was rivetted on the papers that lay before her, she was beginning her story again, when Imogen gently waved her hand to her to retire. Beatrice obeyed; and Imogen, trembling and agitated, drew from amidst the papers the picture of the minstrel of Provence. Two years back, stedfast in the heroism of innocence and virtue, she had deposited this little treasure in the casket; and though she had not the courage to part with it, nor the wish or opportunity to return it to its original, she had never opened the casket, which she had borne about with her as does the enthusiast devotee the hallowed shrine which contains the relic of his tutelar saint.

But now that it was forced upon her notice, now that it lay exposed to her eye, alluring her attention, almost soliciting

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her grasp, she had not, she wished not to have, the courage to resist the innocent temptation of gazing on it; and she, who a few minutes before had shunned the looks, and almost rejoiced in the absence of the original, now hung in rapturous, but melancholy emotion over his shadow. Even virtue forbad not the indulgence which love and opportunity afforded; for it was not the picture of the duke de Beauvilliers that rivetted the eye of the countess de St. Dorval—the cold, the grave, the indifferent duke de Beauvilliers —oh! no: the heart, in the omnipotence of its tenderness, had annihilated the intervening power of time and destiny: it was still the novice of St. Dominick that indulged the play of her enamoured fancy, it was the blooming semblance of the youthful minstrel of Provence that fascinated her ardent gaze, and received the pressure of her glowing lip. Again in the eloquent eye, which seemed to move upon

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the sight of hers, gleamed the brightening dawn of infant passion; still o'er the lips, where all the painter's magic art was lavished, the sigh of half-breathed passion seemed to die. Every lineament, every feature, recalled some sweet stage in love's first delightful era; and memory, rushing through each successive interval of existence, still fondly reverted to that dearly prized period, when enjoyment shed her roses over the felicitous present, and the vista of future life gleamed with the illuminating beams of hope and expectation; and still did the tear, which is dear to the soul, drop from the eye of Imogen on the object of its contemplation; and still did the sigh, which the heart loves to exhale, breathe o'er the crystal that enshrined it: —when a deep sigh, echoing to her own, awakened her rapt attention. With a convulsive start she raised her fearful eyes, and hurried the picture to her bosom; then with a faint shriek covered her face

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in her veil, to shut out the form of him against whose semblance her heart now wildly beat.

The duke de Beauvilliers sprung forward, and falling at her feet, clung to the drapery of her robe as she endeavoured to rise.

"What is it you have to fear?" he exclaimed with emotion; "while the pic-
"ture of De Sorville is still wet with the
"tears of thy love;—oh! precious tears!
"—while his semblance still reposes near
"the heart where he reigns unrivalled,
"what have you to fear from the presence
"of one, whose only hope, whose only
"wish, is now to be the friend of both?
"As such, as such only, do I now kneel
"at the feet of the countess de St. Dor-
"val."

A bolt of ice seemed to shoot through the heart of Imogen; unable to subdue, unable to conceal, the violence of her emotion, trembling and weak, she again

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endeavoured to rise. The duke seized her hands.

"Hear me!" he exclaimed, "in mercy "to yourself, oh! hear me. It is for your "sake, not for my own, that I now sup- "plicate."

Imogen's feelings, wound up to an excess of agony, nerved her (almost fainting) frame with momentary strength. She burst from the grasp of the duke, but in the struggle his picture fell from her bosom. Vanquished, she sunk again on her seat.

The duke still holding her hands in the clasp of one of his, with the other took up the picture, and exclaimed, "I conjure "you in the name of him whose—"

The words died on his pale and trembling lips; his eyes were fixed in a wild and doubtful gaze on the picture; breathless and panting he fell prostrate at her feet, and hid his face in the folds of her robe, which he wildly impressed with a

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thousand burning kisses. For five minutes a convulsive sigh, an half-stifled sob, a faint and broken exclamation only, disturbed the silence which emotions too violent, too great for utterance imposed. The duke held the hands of Imogen, and reposed on them his wildly throbbing temples; their pulse responded to the throb of his, and they were bathed with his tears. Imogen, dissolved and wholly overcome, had not the power to withdraw them: the duke himself released them, and appeared to search for something in his bosom; then, with a shudder that seemed to shake his whole frame, he again seized the hands of Imogen, covered them with impassioned caresses, and exclaimed wildly,

"Thou hast bereft me of every thing "but my honour; leave me, oh! leave "me that;—for *thy husband* is *my* "*friend!*"

After the solemn pause of a moment,

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He rushed out of the room, and Imogen sunk back in a state of utter insensibility.

Recollection returned with less rapidity than life. All that had past, Imogen endeavoured to call to mind, like the scattered visions of a faded dream; but the idea most buoyant in her memory was, that she had betrayed her passion for one who only called himself her friend, and who she believed pitied rather than returned the weakness he had witnessed. In the bosom of Imogen the feelings of wounded pride, of wounded delicacy, gave their colouring to every thought, to every supposition. She believed that the duke de Beauvilliers had come either as the herald of his friend's wishes, on the subject of their approaching union, or to warn her of the imprudence of her conduct, by which that union might be for ever dissolved. Yet he had found her lavishing the most tender caresses on his

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own picture; he had beheld it bathed with her tears, and consigned to her bosom, where he might naturally suppose it dwelt a constant and treasured companion. There was madness in the thought.

"Oh!" said the weeping Imogen, "had "his spirit so associated with mine as to "leave me no room to regret the secret I "so unwittingly betrayed; had my soul "found repose in the acknowledged ten- "derness of his; had he endeavoured to "preserve me high in my own conscious- "ness, and to convince me that, though "dear to his heart, I was still more ex- "alted in his esteem, some ray of conso- "lation had been left me: but now the "pity he lately felt is united to contempt, "and he who supplicated me to save his "honour could hold no elevated opinion "of the stability of mine. And yet that "God, who alone sees into my heart, be- "holds the purity of my thoughts, and the "rectitude of my principles."

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While tears of anguish still flowed down the cheek of Imogen, and she leaned despondingly on her folded arms, she heard the noise of a footstep in the anti-chamber. She had scarcely time to draw her veil over her face, and pick up the fatal picture, which she now almost beheld with horror, when a page entered and delivered her a card: it was an invitation from the lord high chamberlain, in the king's name, to a lottery the following day, when it was his majesty's pleasure to distribute some valuable trinkets, as prizes to the most distinguished ladies of the court.

At a moment when the sombre hue of her thoughts led her to suppose she was abandoned by the world, because she fancied she was abandoned by him who was all the world unto her, she deeply felt the distinction with which she was honoured by this particular mark of royal attention; and determined to avail herself of it, to appear with all her wonted splendour,

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and to convince the chevalier and the duke she had not been chid into submission by the stoical severity of the one, nor reduced to a state of hopeless pining sorrow by the indifference of the other. Such was the result of those inferences, drawn from the sophistry of a too fastidious delicacy, the ardour of irritable feelings, and the disappointed emotions of a too exquisite and unhappy sensibility.

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CHAP. XXXIV.

" To know
" That which before us lies in daily life,
" Is the prime wisdom."

MILTON.

" I've ta'en too little care of this."

SHAKSPEARE.

NEVER had the inclinations of Imogen pointed less towards pleasure and amusement, than when on the following morning, habited in Eastern though tasteful splendour, with an air of " lifeless anima-" tion" she descended from her dressing room. As she crossed the hall to her carriage, she was met by the chevalier de Sorville. Struck by her dazzling appearance, he started; then coldly bowing, he advanced, took her hand, and led her in

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silence into the study, the door of which lay open. Imogen looked amazed—the chevalier closed the door, laid his hat on the table, presented her a chair, and cooly said:

"Give me leave to request an audience "of half an hour from you."

"Half an hour!" repeated Imogen, endeavouring to veil the heaviness of her heart beneath an air of affected gaiety; "my dear chevalier, in a moment so cri- "tical as this, half an hour is half an age "—I am going to court, and my carriage "is in waiting."

"No, madam," said the chevalier, "your carriage is not in waiting, for I "have dismissed it."

"Then, sir," said Imogen, while her cheek glowed with the blush of indigna- tion, "you do but give me the trouble to "re-order it;" and she walked towards the bell.

"Softly, lady," said the chevalier, seiz-

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ing her hand; "you know not what you "do:—your engagements are doubtless "important, for they are the engagements "of pleasure, the business of your life, "and apparently the end and object of "your being: but at present, madam, "there are other claims on you of still "greater importance, to which your ear "*must* lend attention, though that of "your heart has so long been denied "them."

The chevalier again presented her a chair, and Imogen, trembling beneath the haughty air of affected spirit, sat down, saying,

"Then, sir, let those claims be briefly "made."

"In brief then, madam," he cooly returned, "I come to plead the claims of "the indigent, the oppressed, the de-"frauded, of those whom your blind ex-"travagance has rendered poor, whom "your careless resignation of your affairs

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" into the hands of mercenary domestics " has subjected to the insolence of un- " feeling ignorance; and who long and " vainly have solicited the fruits of that " labour and industry, which pride should " have blushed to have withheld, though " conscience was dead to their just im- " portunities."

The chevalier then drew a number of papers from his pockets; and having gone over the names, the histories, and demands of those which the steward had already circumstantially related to Imogen, he continued:

" Here is another list of unfortunate " victims of unprincipled extravagance. " Here is an account of a long arrear to a " mercer in the city, who, impoverished " by the ill payment of the countess de " St. Dorval and other ladies of distinc- " tion, has become a bankrupt, and whose " creditors will now apply for the money " in a manner not so easily repulsed:

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"Here is a jeweller's bill of immense "amount, although he has given receipts "for large sums: the last articles specified are a diamond aigrette, presented as "a birth-day gift to mademoiselle d'Entragues, and a diamond ring to monsieur "de Servin, for writing a complimentary "sonnet and setting it to music. This "indeed might be deemed liberality, lady, "in an empress, but in a private individual it is not only imprudent, but dishonest; for it is impossible at once to "be just and extravagant. The unfortunate jeweller is now languishing in a "prison.—Here is the account of a poor "tradesman—"

"Cease, sir," interrupted Imogen, endeavouring to hide the tremulous emotion of her self-reproving heart beneath the veil of offended pride; "cease, I entreat—"where the bare recapitulation is insupportable, the commentaries of sarcastic "reproof, or the aggravation of oblique

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" reproach may be spared. I was ignorant " until this moment of many circum- " stances you have related, without in- " deed much delicacy to the feelings of " your auditress."

" Lady," returned the chevalier, point- edly, " were not my auditress lost to " every sense of feeling, of principle, or " of delicacy, these circumstances had " not been recapitulated, these commen- " taries had not been made."

Imogen with difficulty suppressed those emotions which swelled her bosom almost to suffocation; and with a dignity of manner, that formed a strong contrast to the secret humility of her feelings, she replied,

" In the over-acted authority of a guar- " dian, the chevalier de Sorville seems to " forget he has yet no legal claim to play " the tyrant, nor ever may have."

" Nor never will have, madam," re- turned de Sorville, firmly; " Oh! no!

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"thinkest thou, lady, I would covet the "possession of an heart which every cox- "comb fool can boast of having touched? "thinkest thou I would associate my mind "with one which, dead to all the higher "powers of intellect, resigns itself to the "influence of vanity and all her train of "ostentatious follies?—No. When my "heart betrayed and gloried in its love, it "throbbed with tenderness for Imogen, "such as I then believed, such as I then "found, her; meek, amiable, ingenuous "—the fond, the duteous daughter—the "affectionate, the all-confiding friend— "the tender, the refined, the faithful mis- "tress—with a genius that soared above "the errors and the prejudices of the world, "not above its approbation or its censure. "Such *was* Imogen; the object of my "esteem, the idol of my affections: nor "will I violate the sweet recollection of "what she *was*, by placing it in the scale "of comparison with what she *is*. As

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" she was, I would have cherished her,
" lived for her, died for her—as she is!"
Here the chevalier paused for a moment;
then with a low and rapid tone of voice
he continued: " Those engagements, form-
" ed at her mother's monument, and ra-
" tified by the voice of her dying father,
" I now for ever cancel; those vows so
" solemnly pledged I consider as no lon-
" ger binding; and that heart, that hand,
" so freely, so voluntarily offered in a mo-
" ment of virtuous emulation and ardent
" gratitude, I reject: and thus for ever
" dissolve an alliance it would have been
" misery, if not dishonour, to have en-
" gaged in. One word more, lady, and
" I have done. This letter, which I sub-
" mit to your perusal, I received this day
" in answer to one you sent to your Pro-
" vençal agent, and who addressed him-
" self to me, in delicacy to your feelings.
" On its receipt I went to your steward,
" from whom I collected these accounts,

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"and learned the desperate state of your "affairs; from him I also learned that "your gambling debt to the marquis de "Sancy was not yet defrayed. And now, "madam, I release you from your con- "finement. Now, while Justice makes "known her claims—but vainly makes "them; and while unrequited industry "pines in hopeless imprisonment, or sends "forth the supplicating sigh of poverty to "unfeeling rank—but sighs unheard, let "the gay, the thoughtless lady de St. "Dorval fly to her daily rounds of plea- "sure and amusement, fly from the im- "portunities of those whose miseries she "has assisted to create. She is now at "liberty."

The chevalier took his hat, and walked slowly towards the door; but pausing half way, returned a few steps—paused again, and fixed his eyes on Imogen, in the apparent expectation that she would address him, but fixed them in vain. A minute

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elapsed, and Imogen was silent; her head averted, her form supported by an antique stand on which she leaned; the chevalier with a hurried step returned to the door, and faintly uttering "*Farewel* FOR EVER," retired.

A quarter of an hour elapsed—Imogen still remained standing in the attitude in which the chevalier had left her. The ray of transient spirit which had played in her eyes was fled, their orbs were dim and beamless; the blush of indignation which had glowed on her cheek was faded to a deadly paleness. Shuddering starts crept through her agitated frame; every nerve was wound up to agony; every pulse throbbed with feverish wildness; and every respiration was a sigh that seemed to burst the heart from whence it flowed. To this state of insupportable emotion succeeded a passion of tears; a burning heat flushed her cheek, while her trembling hands were cold as the touch of death, and her sobs

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were almost convulsive. She threw herself on a couch and wept; till, faint and exhausted, her agitation subsided; her feelings became soothed by their boundless indulgence; her flurried thoughts glided into a train of more calm consideration; and all that had passed in her late interview with De Sorville recurred forcibly to her mind. Reproved, condemned, rejected by him whose esteem was at once the stimulus and reward of all her more virtuous actions; her conduct for the first time flashed on her apprehensions in such glaring colours of criminality, as rendered even the representation of De Sorville but a faint and imperfect sketch of her errors. Her nice sense of honour, the rigid virtue of her principles, roused from the torpor in which an heart devoted with all its energies to one only object, a mind borne away in the dissipation of its own ideas, had lulled them, and seeing every thing through the exaggerated medium of her own poig-

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nant feelings, she beheld herself in the light of a lost and guilty being, whose love of virtue had survived her adherence to its principles, only to render the stings of conscience more acute and envenomed.

She who a few days before would have considered the chevalier's voluntary rejection of her hand as one of the happiest circumstances of her life, now looked upon that rejection as the death-warrant of her peace: for deserted by him she loved, and rejected by him she esteemed, she had now lost all that the tenderest, the most exalted, friendship could bestow, without receiving that equivalent which love only could give. It was now she felt the weakness of that mistaken haughtiness of soul that had induced her to return the just, but severe, accusations of the chevalier, with supercilious retort or stubborn silence —it was now she felt that it would be comparative happiness to fall at his feet, to acknowledge her errors, and to solicit his com-

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passion, while she confessed herself unworthy of inspiring any other sentiment.

"But he has left me!" she exclaimed aloud, in the vehemence of her emotions, "for ever deserted me—*for ever!* Oh, "no! he will not, he cannot for ever "abandon the daughter of St. Dorval— "the friendless unprotected orphan whom "the world has courted only to destroy."

Then with a feeble trembling hand she took up her agent's letter, and read as follows:

To Monsieur le Chevalier de Sorville.

"MONSIEUR,

"My lady the countess having done me the honour to draw on me for a larger sum than I could possibly accumulate in the course of six months, unwilling to wound my lady's feelings, I take the liberty of addressing my answer to you, monsieur,

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which you will have the goodness to soften as much as possible.

" I could not raise the half of the sum she has demanded, without a mortgage on some part of the property, or cutting down the wood planted by the great grandsire of my lady countess, or the grove of pines which lies to the left of the high road to Avignon, and which monseigneur the late count was so much attached to. And monsieur le chevalier must know, that the great number of gentlemen and followers, maintained by the late count de St. Dorval during the civil wars, when he almost supported a little army himself, (little thinking, heaven rest his soul! that he had a young lady alive to spend his money when he should be no more), so as to leave his coffers empty at his death, and no arrears whatever due by his vassals and tenantry; besides all the produce of the estate being sent yearly to the league

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army, instead of being sold or consumed at home; for many a time and oft have I bought provisions at Avignon, at the highest prices, for the chateau, while the finest produce of the lands was lavishing on the soldiery, who would afterwards come in droves and destroy our vineyards, and prey upon the vassals—but that was no business of mine.

"Monsieur will therefore have the goodness to recollect how hard pressed I was to make up the sum which my lady countess brought up with her to Paris three months back; and that I was obliged to bear down so heavy upon the tenants, that many of them threw up their farms, and went to join the royal army in Picardy during the winter."

The letter unfinished dropt from the trembling hands of Imogen; and a pang of remorse, sharper than all she had yet felt, shot through her agonized heart.

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" When we suffer," she exclaimed, " from the vices or the crimes of others, " from a participation in public calamity, " or the involvement of domestic misfor- " tune unavoidably incurred, misery ap- " proaches sustained by fortitude, and " supported by resignation, dignified, not " oppressed, by the hand of chastisement. " Our nature, like gold in the crucible, " refines and purifies in its trial; and the " conscious heroism of affliction repays " its sufferings by the proud self-appro- " bation it brings with it. But when sur- " rounded by all those worldly blessings " which ought to act as the preventives " of error and the inducements to virtue, " we stretch forth a hand, and impiously " plant the thorn which rankles in our " breast; when we become not only the " author of our sufferings, but of the " miseries of others, by a careless neg- " lect of our duties or a voluntary pursuit " of error; when the aching heart seeks

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" in vain for one consolatory recollection
" to soothe its reproachful agonies; when
" the long slumbering or long rejected
" reason sends forth an anxious enquiry
" for one plausive excuse to plead the
" cause of conscience—but vainly sends;
" then the gloomy soul can catch no fleet-
" ing beam of comfort, and remorse seizes
" its victim, and consigns it to all the hor-
" rors of despair."

This soliloquy, almost articulately pronounced, and proceeding from the magnified aspect in which her conduct appeared to her newly awakened feelings, was succeeded by a shower of tears, and by convulsive sobs that shook her frame almost to dissolution. In this deplorable situation Imogen was discovered by one of her own domestics. Her groom of the chambers entered the room to inquire whether her carriage should again be ordered for the Louvre; an inarticulate "No," was all the answer Imogen could return.

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The chevalier's having ordered back the carriage, his conference at such a moment with their lady, her remaining so long alone after his departure, and the state in which the groom found her, afforded a subject of amazement and surmise to all her domestics. The rumour soon reached the ears of Beatrice, who, with all the affectionate impetuosity of a Provençal, rushed into the room where her mistress still sat weeping, and exclaimed:

"Blessed saints! my lady, what is the "matter? How is it possible to cry with "such a wreath of diamonds on one's "head? Well, what every body says "must be true; not that I ever believe a "word that is said in the servants' hall; "but if ever a chevalier in the realm "should prevent me going to court, were "I a countess, why then my name is not "Beatrice. The whole world cries shame "on him for a cross severe guardian; and "many a fine handsome young nobleman

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" would be glad to be in his place this
" moment, which monsieur Francois him-
" self told me: not to speak of his being
" an heathen, an infidel, and a hugonot,
" which every body knows, and moreover
" that he would as soon do a good turn
" for a Turk or a Jew as a Christian. But
" sure my lady must be ill!—holy St.
" Barbara, what a pale cheek is here!"

" I am ill," said Imogen faintly, and endeavouring to give another turn to the suspicions of her servant.

" What, lady, a sickness about the heart,
" I warrant?" returned Beatrice.

Imogen shook her head, and wept afresh.

" Poor dear lady," exclaimed Beatrice,
" that is a woful disorder: I had a cousin
" who died of it, although he wore a sca-
" pular round his neck which had been
" rubbed to the jaw bone of St. Paul. It
" came on all of a sudden after he had
" finished a game of quoits, by which he

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" lost the last farthing he was worth. He " died shortly after, and his poor children " are now begging through the world: " Christ be good to us!"

Imogen arose, dried her eyes, endeavoured to conceal her emotion, and desired Beatrice to give orders to the porter to deny her to all who should call. Beatrice looked surprised, but flew to obey her; and Imogen, collecting the papers which lay scattered on the table, retired to her boudoir; and, having divested herself of all her ornaments, spent the rest of the day in pacing her chamber with that restless agitation, that vague and desultory state of mind, which can repose on no one point of reflection, which can form no determinate plan of conduct. Thought rushed after thought in tumultuous emotion, and chased each other down as they successively arose.

At the usual hour a sumptuous dinner was served up; and Imogen, to avoid the

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surmises of impertinent curiosity in her domestics, descended to the *sallon a manger*. A number of covers were laid, but for the first time laid in vain; for Imogen for the first time dined alone. She shuddered as she contemplated the solitary splendour by which she was surrounded; and having trifled with some sweetmeats, which a tear more than once moistened, she arose and passed on to her own apartment, amidst a numerous range of domestics splendidly habited.

The grey light of a winter's evening, the faint beam of an almost extinguished fire, which burnt in a brasier of a beautiful antique form, dimly lighted up the room, which Imogen still continued to pace with an undeviating step. The magnificent *sallon a manger*, the sumptuously covered table, the crowd of luxurious and indolent domestics, still haunted her conscience: while the sickly train of misery, the imprisoned tradesman, the impoverished far-

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mer, the bankrupt merchant, and the oppressed peasant, rose in sad succession on her memory. The forms of De Beauvilliers and De Sorville closed the visionary procession which remorse had conjured up. The gloom seemed to thicken round her. With a mind almost frenzied she flew to the saloon: it was brilliantly illuminated, but it was empty, and darkness still hung on the mind of its solitary mistress. The porter as usual sent in his book; two names only were registered in it during the day, the names of an ingrate and a creditor, De Servin and De Sancy. Imogen trembled as she read, and returned the book in silence. The agent's letter, which she expected would have enabled her to cancel her debt to De Sancy, had now arrived, but what had been its contents—she shuddered to remember!

Wearied by the agitation of mind and body she had sustained, she retired early to bed—but not to rest. Conscience, like

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the hag of midnight's witching dream, still pressed a deadly weight upon her bosom; and even in the transient repose which exhausted nature snatched from woe, the visions of remorse hovered round her pillow, and chased the spirit of slumber that would have lulled her cares into momentary oblivion.

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CHAP. XXXV.

Un alma granda
E teatro a se stissa - - - - ella en segretto
S' approva e si condemna
E placida - - - - e secura
Del volgo spittatore l'aura non cura.

METASTASIO.

Left and abandoned by her velvet friends.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE next morning Imogen arose, rather wearied than refreshed by the short and harassing slumbers of the night; unable to form any independant plan of conduct, while the faintest hope of awakening an interest in the bosom of De Sorville lived in her own. So long accustomed to repose on his better judgment in every exigency, and, till within the last two months of her life, to be guided by his opinion and go-

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verned by his advice, she could now decide on nothing until she made one struggle to regain that inestimable friendship, which she had never so justly appreciated as at the moment she feared it was lost to her for ever. She therefore determined to write to him. But how reconcile the proud and haughty spirit of the past day's conduct with the contrite and humble feelings of the present? After having written and torn several notes, Imogen contented herself with sending two suppliant lines, bathed with her tears, and dictated in real anguish of heart, requesting he would indulge her with half an hour's interview that evening at six o'clock. The laquais to whom Imogen delivered this billet demanded, in the name of the coachman, if it was his lady's pleasure the carriage should be got ready? "Certainly not" was Imogen's impulsive answer, but the reflection of a moment induced her to recal her words, and the horses were ordered to be immediately harnessed.

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At a moment when a thousand vague and gloomy presages floated on the surface of her imagination, every incident, every circumstance, received its colouring from their predominant hue; and no female visitant having called on her the preceding day, and only two giddy and inconsiderate girls the day before, she fancied that her not having appeared abroad since the *festin* of the duchess de Montmorency, and her absence from the court lottery, might sanction the rumours of malice, and countenance those reports which envy was every day broaching to her disadvantage. Endeavouring, therefore, to chase the shadow of affliction from her brow and the traces of remorse from her countenance, she entered her carriage, and drove to the hotel de Montmorency, concealing her face with her veil, fearing lest in every eye she should meet the supplicating glance of a creditor, or the reproachful looks of one whom she had injured. As soon as her avant cou-

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rier had announced her arrival at the hotel de Montmorency, the porter said "his "lady was not at home;" when the carriage turning round the court, Imogen cast her eyes towards a balcony that ran along the front of the hotel, and beheld the duchess de Montmorency leaning over the balustrade with several ladies and gentlemen, among whom she discovered the ladies d'Entragues and de Beuil, and the marquis de Saney: they coldly returned the transient glance of the solitary visitor, but took no further notice of her.

Imogen sunk back in the carriage, and a feeling of mortified pride, for a moment, swallowed up every other. Unknown to herself she was carried to the hotel de Belleisle. She had given previous orders to be driven there; and though now unfit for every society, she had not presence of mind to countermand her orders until the carriage stopt at the door. She to whom but a few days before every door flew open now felt

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a momentary satisfaction that even one admitted her.

The marchioness de Belleisle, from being once so renowned for her gaiety and charms, had now become a professed devotee; and when Imogen was ushered up to the apartment where she received her levee, she found her surrounded by priests, abbés, jesuitical monks, and female bigots.

The witty and agreeable bishop de Rouenne stood close to the door as Imogen entered it, and she gladly stopt to chat to him, and to spare herself the trouble of forcing her way through the crowd by which the marchioness was surrounded. After some indifferent conversation which she, with difficulty, endeavoured to support, she fancied that the usually free and easy manners of the bishop laboured under some restraint; that his answers were more incoherent; his air confused; and his eyes were constantly turned towards the company, while the position she stood in con-

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cealed it from her view. Anxious to learn the cause of his abstraction, she turned round, and observed every eye fixed on herself, while every ear seemed to lend its attention to a person who, in a low voice, was speaking to the lady de Belleisle in the centre of the group.

The words "a poor novice of the order "of St. Dominick" met her ear distinctly, and the circle giving way, the forms of the lady Magdelaine de Montmorelle and the father Anselme saluted her eye. She saw, she heard no more. The mortification of her feelings had now reached its climax, and she would have sunk to the earth, but the arms of the good bishop received her. Touched with the tenderest compassion, while others gazed on her only with curiosity or triumph, he conveyed her to her carriage. The freshness of the air revived her; she wept and pressed the hand of the bishop in silence. "I pity you from my "soul," said he with emotion, "and will

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" persist to the end of time in believing " you innocent."

" In believing me innocent!" repeated faintly the astonished Imogen; but he had returned to the house, and the carriage drove on. Imogen threw herself back, and remained in almost a torpid state until roused by the carriage being blocked in between two others. The one was empty, but the other bore the arms of the lord high constable, and was filled with the ladies whom Imogen had seen in the balcony. She now timidly shrunk back to avoid their intrusive glances, when the carriage door was burst open, and two ferocious looking men putting in their heads, one of them, with a Stentorian voice, exclaimed: " Come, lady, alight if you please, " there is an execution laid on your coach " by monsieur le Texier, the maker."

Imogen sat immovable as a statue; the ladies stretched their necks out of their carriage window, and her servants began to

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expostulate with the two officers of justice, one of whom had got into the carriage, while the other held the lock of the door in his hand. A mob now collected round the vehicles; and it being generally understood that it was the magnificent equipage of the celebrated countess de St. Dorval which had been seized on for debt, some contented themselves with looking in at the carriage window, and walking away with a shrug of compassion; and others remained to see the business out, loudly declaring "that it was easy to make a "figure at other folks' expense."

A gentleman now advanced from amidst the crowd, and, with a respectful air, intreated the countess de St. Dorval would permit him to place her in the empty carriage, which he ordered to draw up close to her own, until this unpleasant mistake could be settled. Imogen, confused, overwhelmed, bewildered, suffered him to lead her out of her own carriage and place her

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in the other. As she passed to it, she observed De Servin among the crowd, who coldly bowed to her, and then turned towards the ladies in the carriage with a sneer.

This little incident operated like an elixir on the fading spirits of Imogen; this instance of human turpitude, of depravity, and ingratitude, weighed against her own errors, made them appear but a feather in the scale. With some degree of comparative self-satisfaction, she turned towards the stranger to thank him for his humanity and attention, and discovered him to be the lord de Chateauneuf, at the expense of whose appearance and character she had amused herself with the witty marquis de Sancy on the day of her first appearance at court. Her transient beam of self-complacency expired, and with great difficulty she assured him of that gratitude she so profoundly felt. At the same moment, one of the officers of justice mounted the coach-box of

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her carriage, and drove it away amidst the loud huzzas of the mob; while the vehicle in which De Chateauneuf had placed her drove towards the hotel de St. Dorval, followed by her servants on foot.

In spite of the sufferings, the trials, the mortification she had this day undergone, one faint ray of hope smiled on the gloomy horizon of her fate—the faint expectation of a propitious answer from the chevalier de Sorville. As soon as she reached her own apartment, to which she hurried the moment she arrived at home, she sent for the laquais whom she had intrusted with her billet: he gave her a letter; with trembling hands she opened it—it was her own. Unable to speak, she looked up in her servant's face for an explanation: he said he had called at the gentleman's house where the chevalier resided; that he only found there the house steward and a *femme de charge;* that from them he learnt the family had gone to their seat in Guienne two

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days back; and that early on that morning the duke de Beauvilliers had called in a travelling carriage on the chevalier de Sorville, who went off with him, the chevalier's servant having set off the night before with his luggage, and that they believed the chevalier and the duke were going to England.

"Then I have not a friend on earth," exclaimed Imogen, in an accent of despair, and, unmindful of the presence of her servant, burst into tears. "The god of good-
"ness forbid!" said the laquais, wiping his eyes; "it were a pity of pities that you,
"lady, should want a friend yourself, who
"have been a friend to so many."

Imogen shook her head and wept bitterly; the laquais retired with a bow lower than usual, and monsieur le Brun entered at the same moment without any bow at all.

The steward was laden with papers, which he threw down on a table before Imogen:
"these are a few small bills, lady (said he)

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" which people have sent in to-day who " would never have thought of being im- " portunate but for some ugly rumours " which are beginning to circulate on " every side; and beside, here is Etienne " the valet de place, and Adrienne the " avant courier, and Ambrose and Robi- " chon, my lady's head grooms, and mes- " sieurs Bernardine and Eustaches, the " two first laquais, who all demand their " discharges or their wages."—" They " shall have both," said Imogen, in a tone of firmness.—" Marry, here are their ac- " counts, lady; they have been more regu- " larly kept than paid, that is certain," continued monsieur le Brun, turning over the leaves of a large book. " As for my- " self I am willing to continue the faithful " servant of my lady countess, if it is her " good pleasure, although I have the offer " of an excellent situation from the lady " governess of the royal household, with a

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" chance of being made one of these days " a yeoman of the buttery."

" Monsieur le Brun," said the countess de St. Dorval haughtily, " leave your own " account with those of my other servants; " send me all the books, bills, and papers " you have of mine at present in your " hands, and inform my domestics they " shall *all* be paid and discharged before " to-morrow evening."

" ALL, lady?" repeated the steward.

" ALL," returned Imogen, " with the " exception of the few persons I brought " with me from Provence and the laquais " who just left the room; with them it " shall be optional to remain or go."

" And my lady's humble servant?"

" Shall be among the *first* to depart," said Imogen, with a tone of decision.

Monsieur le Brun shrugged his shoulders, bowed, and retired. In a few minutes he returned with the rest of the ac-

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counts he had in his hands; he laid them before Imogen, repeated their vast amount with a significant air, and then endeavoured to expostulate with his lady.

"Monsieur le Brun," said Imogen, "you may retire." The mortified steward obeyed. The heart of the oppressed and suffering Imogen was too full, her pride too deeply wounded, her feelings too dreadfully lacerated by the ingratitude of those who had revelled in the comforts her liberal heart had delighted to lavish on them, who had so long enjoyed those luxuries her thoughtless bounty had provided them, to enter into any argument with her faithless steward; besides, that every reproach she would have pointed at him must have aimed an oblique opprobrium at herself. "Well," said she, "may a mercenary do-"mestic have slumbered over the interest "and betrayed the confidence of his too-"confiding mistress, when she herself fa-

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" voured the cheat, and became the will-
" ling accessary to her own ruin."

It is under the pressure of great and sudden exigencies that the faculties of a strong and comprehensive mind awaken to a full sense of their own power. The spell of golden prosperity which, like the torpedo's touch, lulls the object of its influence into soft and senseless slumbers, once broken by the powerful *decharm* of unexpected evil or sudden afflictions the energies of the superior but long dormant soul rouse into boundless activity, and genius, (emanation of heaven !) even though tortured from its native bias to a foreign course, and forced from the soaring flight of its elevated views to the humble level of common-place concerns, still betrays itself fruitful in expedients and successful in effort to obviate or to vanquish those evils which mere intellectual mediocrity would shrink from encountering, or submit

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to rather than oppose. Abandoned by the world, equally deserted by her enemies and her friends, thrown upon herself for counsel and exertion; the mind of Imogen revolved into itself, and became armed against all the contingent evils which hung with impending ruin over her head. Firm and collected, she determined not only to oppose but break the shock: as when the omniscient eye of nature beholds the distant gathering cloud surcharged with the electric flame that threatens violation to the harmony of her system, suddenly she interposes her watchful power, and by one great and extraordinary effort restores the equilibrium to the scale of universal order.

With a calm and steady circumspection Imogen now examined the state of her affairs, including the past, the present, and the future circumstances of her life; then with one heart-exhaled sigh to the memory of that pure, that noble friendship she

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had for ever forfeited, with a sigh less articulate but more profound, breathed in tender anguish to the dear and soft recollection of that once all-pervading sentiment which even in the grasp of misery, in the returning strength of heroism and of virtue, still awakened one faint thrill of rapture on the almost torpid nerve of bliss, she shook off the "leavings of her "weakness," and devoted every energy of her strong mind to the retrieval of her affairs. Among the brilliant and fascinating accomplishments which art and science had lavished on her, her guardian had forced one humble but necessary acquirement. He had made her an excellent accomptant, and Imogen now, for the first time, derived a serious benefit from her arithmetical skill. Having arranged all her papers, looked over her books, and examined even the minutest bill and most trival account, she made herself mistress of the full amount of her debts. She then ex-

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examined her rent-roll, and rendered the general state of her affairs the object of her immediate consideration. Those shadows which remorse, sensibility, and amazement had cast over the perceptions of her mind now gradually evaporated; and she felt that however pressed down by immediate distress, however importuned by heavy and present demands, this source of suffering could be but transient, (although the remorse arising from it would be eternal,) for that though now without a livre in her possession, and indebted many thousands, she was yet mistress of a noble and rising property, which though not immediately must be inevitably productive, even though she prevailed on the chevalier to accept of that partition which, according to her father's will, she had justly forfeited, since she was the efficient cause of the dissolution of their projected alliance.

To remove, therefore, the acute distresses of the impending hour was the object of

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her anxiety and consideration. Possessed of as much judgment as refined taste, she knew the full value of her beautiful collection of paintings, statuary, coins, natural and artificial curiosities, &c. &c., which, at such an immense expence, she had brought from Italy. The bills that lay before her fatally convinced her of the great value of the jewels, plate, and furniture which she had purchased, besides those which had descended to her by inheritance; and in what manner to transmit these rich possessions into specie, to answer the purposes of present exigency, she was still revolving in her mind on the evening of that day her feelings had encountered so many mortifying trials, when Jaques, the laquais already mentioned, entered the room: cautiously closing the door after him, he advanced with a respectful bow, and demanded, "if "the porter had received orders to deny "his lady to every person who should "call."

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"That were unnecessary, I believe," said Imogen, with a sigh; "has any one "called, Jaques?"

"Not a christian soul, lady, save an "elderly gentleman who is now waiting be- "low in the great hall to know if my lady "will do him the honour to admit him on "very particular business."

"Knowest thou not who he is, Jaques?" demanded Imogen, somewhat surprised at the lateness of the visit. "Marry, no, "lady! not I! but he seems a person "of no great condition, and very feeble "withal, poor soul."

"Some unfortunate creditor," thought Imogen, sighing; "if so I must not deny "him an audience. He at least has a "right to complain, and I to listen, though "I cannot for the present alleviate." She then desired Jaques "to shew the gentle- "man up."

Jaques opened the door, then after a moment's pause closed it, and advanced,

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with another bow, to Imogen. "My lady," said he, "will pardon the freedom of her "servant, but my heart misgives me with "respect to this stranger, for, the holy "saints guard us from evil! I do believe he "is neither better nor worse than a Jew, "and I trow my lady might have some ob-"jection."

"None in the least, good Jaques," said Imogen, with a faint smile; "you may re-"main, however, in the anti-chamber un-"til he departs."

Jaques departed, and in a few minutes returned with the stranger.

It was a figure of uncommon interest that now presented itself to the eye of Imogen: the stranger seemed weighed down by years and infirmity; his thin form was wrapt in a long black mantle, his face almost concealed by a profusion of grey hair, and his flowing beard descending to his girdle, white with the snow of age; he was supported by a long white staff; he bowed

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low, and accepted, without ceremony, of the chair which Imogen presented him. The dim blaze of a wood fire flashed on the whiteness of his hair and beard, and tinged his sallow cheek with a faint glow, though it did not render his features discernible. Imogen, almost awe-struck, remained for a moment silent, then politely inquired into the nature of his business. In a low voice and foreign accent he replied, "to serve "you, young lady; the world," he added, after a short pause, "calls me *usurer*, be- "cause I have enriched myself by relieving "the necessities of those who, by their own "unguarded and careless liberality, by the "vilany of others, or unavoidable misfor- "tunes, have been plunged in pecuniary "difficulties. That world which calum- "niates *me*, which has ruined *you*, now "triumphs over the destruction it has "caused, and sends forth the tale of *thy* "undoing by a thousand tongues. You "are in debt, lady, but you are honest;

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" *you* have property, *I* have money, and the " law provides equally for the security of " the borrower and the lender; need I say " more?"

The profession of the person before her now at once struck on the apprehension of Imogen; his character, she thought, at once lay open to her. It appeared a union of worldly prudence and integrity, and while she felt greatly shocked at the publicity which rumour had already given to her distress, she was pleased that it had been the means of raising up for her a source of relief which, though literally but a necessary evil, under the influence of her present emotions appeared to her a positive good. Interested by his appearance, touched by his manner, Imogen, in a tremulous tone, replied, " I eagerly embrace your offered " services; you do me justice in believing " I am honest, though imprudent, and that " it is not from want of principle but from " a want of a due exertion of my own mind,

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"and a blamable negligence of my affairs, "that my present difficulties arise."

"And yet," said the usurer, "even in "my humble walk of life the rumour of "the lady de St. Dorval's genius, her wit, "her talents, have reached me."

A faint hectic of lingering ambition tinged the pale cheek of Imogen. "The "world," said she, "always speaks in "terms of exaggeration, and the faults or "the perfections of the object of its capri- "cious notoriety are always viewed in a "magnified aspect. Although I did pos- "sess those talents ascribed to me, I fear it "would be no inviolable security for the "prudence of my conduct, for genius it- "self is not inseparably connected with "that plain sense of which prudence is the "legitimate offspring."

The fire emitted a transient flame, and the eye of the usurer as it met the glance of Imogen sparkled with a beam that seemed not coeval with the snow of his beard.

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"And what lady," said he, "may be the "amount of the sum you require?" Imogen called for lights. The usurer begged to be permitted to wear his hat, unable, from the weakness of his eyes, to encounter the blaze of the tapers; and Imogen, as soon as they appeared, drew a paper from her escritoir, and presenting it to him, said, "this is an account of what I owe, which "includes the amount of what I want."

The usurer put on his spectacles, looked deliberately over the paper, shook his head, and returned it to Imogen.

"It is a great deal," said Imogen, anxiously, "but I have plate, jewels, furni-"ture, and paintings, which cost four "times the sum, and if I could dispose of "them—"

The usurer drew back in apparent surprise. "And why, lady," said he, "not "borrow a sum on your estate in prefer-"ence? It would at least be a less humi-"liating mode of raising money."

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"Perhaps it would," said Imogen firmly, "but when we have humbled ourselves in "the eyes of the worthy and the good we "are not to hesitate the sacrifice of our "pride to the retrieval of our honour and "integrity, in fear of what that part of the "world may say, of whose opinions only "we should stand independant. Besides, "to be candid with you, sir, I do not think "I have that right over my property you "seem to infer. It was bequeathed me in "trust for a race yet unborn, by my an-"cestors, to be handed down to others "free and unincumbered as I received it; "nor shall my sins be visited on the head "of my successor. I must also inform "you that upon the St. Dorval estate I "have only in part a claim; my father "having bequeathed the half of his pro-"perty to a gentleman in case of a certain "failure on my part, which has taken "place." Imogen smothered a rising sigh, and closed her eye on the tear that would

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have escaped its "fringed curtain." The usurer walked away, then after a moment's silence returned and said,

"A report of this circumstance, lady, "has already reached me."

"You will find my personal property," said Imogen, "quite sufficient for the sum "I shall want."

The usurer begged to see her jewels. Imogen produced them from a cabinet. "These," said she, opening a box, "are "the family jewels bequeathed me by my "father. These I would not dispose of; "but I should be glad to borrow on them "what you could with safety lend until "I shall have it in my power to retrieve "them.

"These," taking out another casket, "are the jewels I have purchased myself; "they are, perhaps, less valuable, but "they are more modernly set. These I "would gladly dispose of; here is the bill

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" of what they cost, I am sorry to say it is " not yet half-paid."

The usurer looked over the jewels and the jeweller's bill; then, after a few minutes hesitation, he put his hand in his bosom, drew out a leather purse, and counted out the sum specified. Imogen looked amazed. " I purchase these," continued the usurer, " at the price they cost you, " merely to convince you that the confi- " dence you seem to place in a stranger will " not be betrayed, and that my wishes to " serve you are disinterested. As for your " family jewels, lady, they lie under the " same objection as you have advanced for " the inviolable preservation of your es- " tate."

" As for your statues and paintings, al- " though I am no great judge of such " things, yet I can form a pretty just esti- " mate of their value; first, from their " having been hitherto rare, and now be-

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" coming the fashion in France, and next
" because they belonged to the countess
" de St. Dorval. Virtú has, as yet, made
" but little progress at Paris, although now
" it is beginning to be universally affected.
" You have lived in Italy, I am told; you
" are an artist; your taste is esteemed in-
" fallible; and those who have not the
" judgment to choose for themselves will
" give any price for what you have already
" chosen. The same argument holds good
" with respect to your musical instru-
" ments, furniture, equipages, &c. &c. &c.
" I will, therefore, give you what you paid
" for them without endangering myself,
" and you will be convinced that you have
" got into safe hands."

" Not only into safe but liberal hands," said Imogen, struck by the generosity of the stranger's conduct, " and I gratefully " close with your proposal."

" But will you have any objection to " have them put up to public sale?" demanded the usurer.

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"In my own house?" asked Imogen, faintly.

"Why no, lady, not in your own house; "I will take an inventory of them, and "have them sent to mine, where my ne- "phew exercises the profession of a bro- "ker; but then, they must be publicly "known to be yours, or I should lose by "the purchase."

Between the pride and the rectitude of Imogen a momentary struggle took place; but her nervous mind soon regained its strength of tone, and the dignity of principle soon obtained the ascendancy over the lingering weakness of proud but false delicacy.

"Be it so," she replied, in a tone of decision. "My demand for money is dread- "fully pressing. I have some debts of ho- "nour I am peculiarly anxious to cancel. "My numerous creditors are incessant in "their importunities, and even my own "domestics are become insolent from"— Imogen could not finish what she was about

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to say, and in spite of every endeavour a tear dropt on the diamond cross she was absently rubbing with her handkerchief. The usurer took the cross from her hand, and bending his head over it murmured in a low voice, "precious gem!" then laid it down on the table, and turned his head towards the fire. A pause of a moment ensued. The usurer then told Imogen she should have the money early on the following morning. "Then," said Imogen, "I "wish you would take an inventory of the "valuables you are to have for it to-night." To this the usurer consented.

Accompanied by the usurer, who crept feebly along by her side, followed by a page who carried a light, and by monsieur le Brun, who was to draw out the inventory, Imogen proceeded through the apartments of the hotel de St. Dorval: her heart sunk within her bosom in spite of every effort to support its weakness, as, by the glimmering beam of a solitary taper, she viewed those

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splendid but now deserted rooms, once the gay scenes of all her triumphs and brilliant illusions. From the sumptuous *sallon-a-manger* she passed to the elegant and well-furnished library, and from thence to that favourite apartment where every thing spoke to the senses and the mind, through the medium of the happiest efforts of genius and of taste. Here her musical talents had so often exerted their siren influence, and received the plaudits of a delighted multitude. Here she had first received the duke de Beauvilliers as her guest; and her harp, whose tones she had taught to imitate the strain of her own awakened feelings, and speak to his heart the impassioned language of her own, still stood as it had then done in the centre of the room. Imogen involuntarily touched its chords; they returned a melancholy vibration. She recollected the evening when De Beauvilliers had drawn the instrument towards him, and produced a strain which thrilled on the

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chord of memory and awakened all its finest vibrations. Imogen leaned over the harp, and hid her face in her veil. The past flashed on her mind, the present disappeared.

"And this harp, lady," said the usurer, touching the strings with his wand: they emitted a faint sound; Imogen started: "shall we put down this harp?"

"No," said Imogen, "this I cannot "part with. It is dear to me for a thou- "sand reasons. It is the gift of a friend "also." It had been given her by the chevalier. The moment when she had received it was present to her. She was reading by her father's side in the little portico of the villa de Fiora when it arrived from Florence, and the chevalier placed it before her. The pleasure with which she pressed its chords, the delight which sparkled in the eyes of her parent and her friend, all arose to her memory. She was then innocent, happy, and proud in the conscious-

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ness of her well-tried virtue. What was she now? The contrast was too humiliating to her feelings. She could not conceal her tears, and leaving her servants and the usurer to finish the inventory, she retired to her boudoir; "De Sorville! De Beauvil-"liers!" she passionately exclaimed, "why "are you not here to witness the expia-"tion of all my errors."

In a short time the usurer rejoined her. He read over the inventory; of which, as he read, the steward took a copy. Then promising to bring her the money at an early hour the following morning he departed, leaving Imogen deeply impressed with the almost fatherly interest he took in her concerns, the liberality of his sentiments, and the uncommon generosity with which he had behaved to her on a point where her ignorance of business might have left her wholly at his mercy.

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CHAP. XXXVI.

——— Ah! whither now are fled
Those dreams of greatness; those unsolid hopes
Of happiness; those longings after fame;
Those restless cares; those busy bustling days;
Those gay-spent festive nights; those veering thoughts
Lost between good and ill; that shar'd thy life?—
All now are vanish'd—Virtue sole survives,
Immortal, never-failing friend of man,
His guide and happiness on high!

THOMSON.

SOLITARY and alone, Imogen passed the rest of this eventful day, resigned to a train of reflection, which no longer fluctuated between the goading recollection of her errors, and the wish, unaccompanied by the means of reparation: fixed, resolved, she determined on paying off and discharging her servants the following morning, on assembling her creditors, and cancelling

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her debts; and having finally settled her affairs at Paris, to set off for the chateau de St. Dorval, far from that world by which she had been betrayed and deserted, to pass the rest of her days in retirement, and from the reflection of that happiness she bestowed on others, steal one beam to illumine the gloomy hopeless aspect of her own destiny. "My conscience appeased," she mentally exclaimed, "the wounds of my "feelings cicatrized, if not healed; my "principles restored to their dignity; my "heart alone will remain unsatisfied:— "that heart on which alone I am, and ever "have been dependent for every hope of "happiness." Imogen dared not pursue this dangerous train of thought. The strength of the heroine was no shield against the tenderness of the woman; and the soft instincts of nature triumphed, for a moment, over the powers of reason; her heart alternately glowed with the pure and elevated sentiments of friendship and gra-

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titude, or throbbed with the feverish pulse of ardent but disappointed love. De Sorville and De Beauvilliers alternately filled her imagination, until the tender recollection of the lover, and the friend, subsided in the sad and agonizing conviction, that both were lost to her for ever.

The next morning at an early hour, the usurer waited on her. Imogen, at his request, produced the bills of the various articles he meant to purchase, and received, in spite of some delicate remonstrances, the full sum she had paid, or was to give for them. On her collection of paintings, statues, &c. &c. she herself set the price paid for them in Italy; and her menage was disposed of at a valuation, including her carriages, horses, &c. &c.

Imogen, in the course of the transaction, frequently expressed surprise, gratitude, and amazement, at a conduct so disinterestedly generous. The usurer replied,

"My dear young lady, I perceive you

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"are apt to be led away by the ardor of "your immediate feelings: over-reached "by the world's fraud, and still smarting "from its turpitude, you are amazed to "meet with an honest man, and construe "mere moderation into generosity; but "though by what I now pay you will not "be a loser, trust me I must be a gainer, "for to injure my own interest, merely to "serve another, would not be so much a "virtue as a folly."

Before mid-day Imogen had finally concluded her business with the usurer, and received the amount of the purchases he had made, which were to be carried away in the dusk of the evening; mean time a number of workmen were employed in despoiling the hotel de St. Dorval of those treasures she had with so much taste, so much trouble, and so much expence, enriched it with.

Imogen, as she looked again over the amount of her debts, and then counted the

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gold which the usurer had spread on the table, for the first time felt the value of money. Her first concern was now to pay off and discharge that numerous train of mercenary and insolent domestics, whose luxury, negligence, and extravagance, had so naturely tended to the derangement of her circumstances. Some of them, more polite than others, who looked forward to the revival of those golden days when they should again bask in the sunshine of luxurious indulgence, begged to be retained; and others, who had a real personal attachment to their imprudent but liberal mistress, entreated to serve her without any gratuity, rather than be discharged. But Imogen, with an heart too full to bear expostulation, requested to be spared the repetition of those firm resolves, nothing could induce her to violate. Of the immense retinue, therefore, that once surrounded her, her establishment was now reduced to Beatrice, the two filles de chambres she brought from Italy, her page,

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one laquais, and an old family coachman.

The next day she assembled all her creditors. She beheld their number with amazement and remorse, received them with fascinating complaisance, alternately tinged with the humility of the debtor, and the hauteur of wounded pride.

After the struggle of a moment, self-possessed, collected, and firm, she addressed them in an eloquent and affecting manner, gave a slight outline of that conduct by which they had been so much injured, and endeavoured to palliate its errors, by pleading the inexperience of youth, and that sanguine confidence of character, which had tempted her to repose the conduct of her domestic affairs into the hands of mercenary strangers.

"This attempt" (she added) "to extenuate what cannot be excused, I owe "to the world in general, and to you in "particular, who have been the principal

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" sufferers by my imprudence and folly." Now the tears swelled to her eyes, and her awakened sensibility seemed to communicate a soft infection to her auditors. Touched by her youth, her beauty, her eloquence, and her distress, many of them laid the money she had given them on the table, and begged still to be considered her creditors; while all refused the interest she so liberally offered. Imogen, however, had at last the pleasure of holding in her hands the receipts in full for every thing she owed them, and those people whom the insolence of her domestics had so frequently stimulated to coercive measures, now retired invoking blessings on her head.

Her next and last consideration was to discharge her debts of honour. While she was looking over the memorandums she had made of them, the page brought her the following billets.

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BILLET I.

"A pressing demand obliges mademoi-
"selle d'Entragues to trouble the lady de
"St. Dorval for the trifling sum lost to
"her by the countess at Primero, on three
"several occasions."

BILLET II.

"My dear countess,

"You have not a friend upon earth who
"laments your misfortune more than my-
"self, and were it not for that certain eti-
"quette which the world imposes, nothing
"could prevent me assuring you of my
"sympathy in person. If you can with
"any convenience let me have the trifle
"we played for, and you lost, at Lansque-
"nette, you will infinitely oblige,

"Yours sincerely,

"JACQUELINA DE BEUIL."

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BILLET III.

" Dear Madam,

" The other evening, at the Hotel de " Montmorency, the Goddess of pleasure " seduced me to a card-table: she staked " her money—I my heart; and we both " lost. She was paid in sterling coin, but " of the four hundred crowns lost by her, " one hundred still remains due to, dear " madam,

" Yours most obsequiously,

" De Servin."

BILLET IV.

" I have called twice at your door, and " twice have been denied. You mistake, " beautiful Imogen, the purport of my " visit; it is not the importunities of a " creditor, but the humble, the impassioned " solicitations of a lover, you evade. I " came not, enchanting woman, to make " a paltry pecuniary claim, but such only

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"as love demands, and love alone can "grant. You are still opulent in all that "is most precious and desirable;—youth, "beauty, genius, and tenderness. In com- "petition with these divine possessions pe- "rish all the riches of the earth: the sor- "did world is unworthy of you; oppress- "ed by the malice of your enemies, be- "trayed by the envy of those who called "themselves your friends, abandoned by "the too easily sated De Beauvilliers, de- "serted by the cold phlegmatic De Sor- "rille, there yet lives a heart devoted to "you with all its energies; there yet ex- "ists one who only waits your permission "to fling at your feet his fortune and his "fate.

"DE SANCY.

"*Swiss-Guards Pavilion, Louvre.*"

These heart-wounding letters dropped one by one from the trembling hands of Imogen. The beautiful veil, her fancy had

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flung over the world was now entirely withdrawn. The reluctance with which she had admitted those progressive proofs of its turpitude, which experience hourly forced on her, now no longer existed to smooth the asperity of her disappointed hopes. It was in vain she endeavoured to cling to the bosom of philanthropy; the individual instances of vice, depravity and ingratitude she now witnessed, surrounded her as with a mist, and beyond this gloomy sphere her feelings did not suffer her to extend her view. The cold unkindness of mademoiselle d'Entragues, the base ingratitude of De Servin, struck her more than even the unfriendly negligence of mademoiselle de Beuil, or the equivocal and scarcely understood insult of De Sancy.

Borne away with the impetuosity of her feelings, she was at first going to write to them all; but how touch the hearts of those who had given her such irrefragable proofs that they had disclaimed all feeling, all

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humanity? She, therefore, (when her emotion was somewhat subsided,) wrapped up the respective sums due to each, in their own respective billets, and enclosing each in a blank sheet of paper, dispatched her page to the ladies d'Entragues and de Bruiel, and Jaques, to monsieur de Selvin and the marquis de Sancy.

And now, for the first time, her "bosom's lord sat lightly on his throne." Her debts all paid, her estate unincumbered, and a sum in her purse more than equal to the expences of her journey to Provence; prostrate on the earth, in the glowing effusions of a meek and grateful soul, she offered up her thanksgivings to that Being who had not turned from her "the light "of his countenance" when, wandering in the dark mazes of error, she had implored his protection; who, in endowing her with those passions which sweeten and embitter life, which lead to bliss and verge to misery, had given her in a strong and

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good mind an infallible corrective and restraint.

The greater cause of her anxiety and distress being now obviated, the injury she had done to others being repaired, she had leisure to examine into the source of that she had herself sustained. The neglect, the total desertion of all her female and many of her male friends, (for still a number of dissipated men of rank and fashion importuned her door, but importuned in vain,) she had hitherto ascribed to the derangement of her affairs; the festive ball, the midnight revel, the fantastic masque, no longer lured them to her house, nor could she now expect a continuation of that society which only sought her's for its own selfish gratification.

But, now that her mind, relieved from the pressure of poignant distress, had the power to plume the drooping wing of its keen, but latent, observation; she perceived a secondary cause had influenced the absence

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of those fluttering moths which had spread their gilded pinions around the beamy flame of her prosperous fortune, but fled with its extinction. The oblique hints of mademoiselle d'Entragues, relative to her adventure at Laon; the scandalous reports it had given rise to: the invidious comments made on her exhibition at the hotel de Montmorency; her afterwards being denied admittance there: the manner in which she had been received at the hotel de Belleisle; the presence of the lady Magdelaine, and the humiliating history of the poor novice of St. Dominick, told (she doubted not) with many exaggerating circumstances, which malice was ready to invent and prejudice to receive: the assertions of the bishop de Rouenne, "that he would persist in believing her innocent," implying that he was singular in that belief; together with the libertinism that breathed in De Sancy's billet, and his insinuation that she was "deserted by the sated De Beau-

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de Villiers," now forced the dreadful conviction on her mind, that she was less injured in fortune than in fame. Her pecuniary affairs she might, by the lesson of economy and prudence she had learned from her extravagance, yet retrieve; but the chaste surface of her reputation once stained by the envenomed breath of slander; the stability of her virtue once brought into question; and the purity of her character, not only suspected, but denied; this was a thought that harrowed up her soul; this was an idea that wrung every nerve of her heart; this was a cause of suffering beyond all power of alleviation. The delicate hints of the chevalier, with respect to her connexion with De Sancy; his frequent endeavours to repress that volatility of manner which sprung from the innocence of her heart, and the animated flow of her spirits; and, above all, her last interview with the duke de Beauvilliers, when he begged of her to hear him "in mercy

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" to herself, rather than in kindness to " him," now flashed on her mind in a new light. These were warnings of her impending danger, over which the delicacy of friendship shed a refined mystery, the conscious rectitude of her own principles, the careless security of her own guileless heart, rendered unfathomable.

Those eyes lately moistened with the gracious dew of self-approbation and returning peace, now dropped tears of anguish; and that bosom which lately heaved the sigh of grateful emotion, now throbbed with the convulsive sob of heart-felt anguish. Abandoned to this state of dreadful agitation, Beatrice found her mistress lying on a couch. The affectionate Provençal, since the derangement of her lady's affairs had been made known to her, had never come into her presence, but under the influence of the strongest emotion; and, though unconscious of any new source of suffering which Imogen had to sustain, she now wept over

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her in silence, then endeavoured to offer some consolatory expressions of future hope and happiness, and presenting her lady with a large packet, said "that it had been "left by a servant in grand livery, and "she did not doubt but it contained some "good news." The idea of De Sorville, of De Beauvilliers, swelled to the heart of Imogen; she called for lights, dismissed Beatrice, broke the seals, and read as follows:

"*To the Lady Countess de St. Dorval.*

"An unknown friend takes the liberty "of presenting the enclosed to the lady de "St. Dorval, in the anxious hope that the "pleasing retrospection of her past life "will afford her the means of amusing "away the solitude of her present exist-"ence."

Imogen, in the utmost amazement, took up the inclosure; it was a small pamphlet, in the title-page of which she read, "Bio-

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" graphical Sketch of the celebrated Coun-
" tess de St. D——l: with a striking
" likeness of that Lady in the character
" of Psyche, as represented in the grand
" ballet performed at the hotel de Mont-
" m——y."

The likeness was indeed striking, but the dress and attitude were an indelicate and extravagant caricature.

Imogen paused for a moment for breath; then panting and agitated she ran her eager eye over the few pages it contained. It was a scandalous, but well-written libel, containing a series of malicious inventions, intermingled with such plausive and authenticated anecdotes, as to place the life of the innocent, but imprudent, Imogen in a new light even to herself; while the invidious fabrications of envy and malice were so brilliantly pointed by witty inuendo, so apparently sanctioned by well founded authority, so artfully arranged, and so humorously delineated, as inevitably

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to excite in the reader contempt for the subject of the work, and admiration for the talents of the ingenious author.

It represented Imogen as an eleemosynary member of the convent of St. Dominick, who had eloped during her noviceship with a young page, in the service of a female devotee of rank who visited the convent. That she afterwards engaged in an adventure, which led her to the camp of Laon in the disguise of a minstrel boy; that her beauty attracted the notice of the duke de B——, then baron de M——; but that, disgusted with her gallantries, he had abandoned her, and she afterwards became the mistress of the old count de St. D——l. That the well known romance of the count's character induced him to educate his fair, but illiterate, mistress; for that purpose he carried her to the house of a philosophic friend near Florence, where her extraordinary genius, and the great advantages she enjoyed, soon made

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her mistress of all those brilliant accomplishments to which she had been lately indebted for her fashion and popularity: that she obtained such influence over the count, as to induce him to pass her for a daughter he had lost some years before, on all the nobility of Florence and its neighbourhood. That on his death-bed he bequeathed her his whole fortune; but that the chevalier de S——, having succeeded the count in her capricious affections, she had forgone the splendour of affluence for the enjoyments of love, and had lived with her lost in the utmost privacy for several months after the count's decease. That her usual inconstancy again prevailed, and she left the shades of Tuscany for Paris; that the chevalier accompanied her as her guardian and betrothed husband; that her beauty, her talents, her riches, and the apparent propriety of her conduct, soon rendered her the object of fashionable idolatry; and that the king himself, either

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the victim of imposition, or bribed by her smiles, had granted her letters patent of nobility, with the title of St. D——. But that her premature ruin, brought on by her boundless extravagance, and her former life being revealed by a coincidence of circumstances and the unguarded impropriety of her conduct, had now torn away the veil of deception; and that she now appeared to the view of the world as the most finished and artful adventuress ever registered in the annals of imposition.

The pamphlet fell from the hands of the horror-struck Imogen; and when Beatrice entered the room a few minutes after, she found her lady stretched lifeless on the ground, and the blood flowing from her left temple, which in her fall had struck against the angle of the couch. The cries of the affrighted girl brought the few domestics the hotel contained to her assistance.

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The unhappy Imogen was conveyed to bed, and a surgeon sent for to attend her: he found the wound neither deep nor dangerous, but her wild and wandering eye, almost bursting from its socket, her burning hands, her inflamed and scarlet cheek, and quickly throbbing pulse, declared his senseless patient to be under the influence of a raging fever; which indeed, from the great agitation of mind and body she had lately indured, the irritability of her nerves, and the delicacy of her frame, had for some days been breeding in her veins.

In a vast and gloomy apartment, for they had carried her to the nearest, divested of the light and elegant furniture which had once dissipated its sombre appearance; supplied with a few heavy and cumbrous articles drawn from the lumber-room, in which, three months back, they had been thrown; stretched on a large and comfortless bed, whose heavy velvet hangings and ponderous canopy were impregnated with the mould

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and must of time, oppressed by disease, deserted by the world, abandoned by her friends, surrounded only by a few mercenary domestics, lay the late gay, beautiful, and courted countess de St. Dorval, in whose train the laughing Pleasures wildly frolicked, whose glance was courted by interest, whose smile was coveted by all; a feverish hectic only glowing on that cheek where the blush of health and beauty so lately spread its crimson tints; a look of pious resignation and meek uncomplaining woe streaming from those languid eyes, from whose sparkling radiance the torch of bliss seemed once to have sought its brightness.

Without one endeared bosom to receive the pressure of her aching head, without one caressing hand to alleviate the agony of her throbbing temples, without one willing ear to receive the murmured plaint of drooping weakness, without one tender eye to explain the silent asking glance of

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sickness and of pain, for six days did the deserted Imogen languish through all the sad successive stages of a burning fever, uniting a full consciousness of her deplorable state to the most melancholy depression of spirits and debility of mind. On the seventh her disorder had come to a crisis, and on the eighth every hope of her immediate recovery was entertained.

Youth and a good constitution finally prevailed over the powers of sensibility and disease; and at the close of a fortnight Imogen was able to leave her chill and solitary apartment, and remove to her own less comfortless boudoir and bedroom.

The surgeon who had been called in, attended her through the course of her disorder with unwearied attention and successful skill. Until the last week he had been accompanied by a physician, on whose opinion he seemed to ground his own; but from the day that Imogen had left her

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room they neither of them called. As soon as she was able to write, she sent a note to the house where the surgeon lodged, informing him that she meant to leave Paris for Provence as soon as she was able to travel, and requested to see him in the interim.

The next morning she received the following billet from him.

" The countess de St. Dorval is recovered, and I am overpaid:—before this note will reach her hands I shall be on my way to Normandy.

JEAN DE MAUR."

" Then there yet lives some humanity in the world," exclaimed Imogen, dropping a tear on the note: " and deserted by " all those who call themselves my friends, " I owe the preservation of my life to the " benevolence of a stranger."

The tide of health now began to visit

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once more the exhausted frame of Imogen; her cheek again faintly glowed with its rich colouring, and her eye sparkled with its vital beam. She endeavoured to banish from her mind every thing that could rouse its dormant agonies: she thought not of the past, she spoke not of the present; she made no enquiries; she seemed only anxious to commence a new era of existence.

Beatrice, unasked, informed her that no one had called during her illness except the old usurer, who on the first night of her indisposition had waited on her, to know the intrinsic value of a picture he was going to dispose of; but that hearing of her illness, he had hurried away, "as if," said Beatrice, "he thought there had been a "plague in the house."

Imogen sighed; her heart was now almost invulnerable to disappointment, yet for a moment she felt its shaft inflict a

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wound: she had thought the usurer was not of the common order of beings.

In a few days she found herself able to travel; every thing was prepared for her journey, and the morning of her departure arrived.

Clad in a simple white robe, wrapt in a large mantle, and covered by a long veil, leaning on the arm of Beatrice, the countess de St. Dorval passed through a range of vast and desolate apartments, despoiled of their elegant drapery, their rich and splendid furniture, and with a feeble step and downcast eyes reached the great hall. Here she delivered the keys of her house into the hands of the tradesman's wife who had been sent to prison for the silk hangings he had furnished for the hotel de St. Dorval. The woman she made her housekeeper at Paris, with a suitable allowance, and a small sum of ready money in hand, which her poverty rendered acceptable.

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She then surveyed her travelling equipage: it consisted of the cabriolet she had travelled up to Paris in with the chevalier, for her two women, a small covered litter for herself, and two mules for the page and Jaques.

The morning was only in its dawn when she ascended her humble vehicle. As the carriages rolled through the court, Imogen cast one look on the heavy but magnificent pile she was, she believed, for ever quitting. The emotions with which she had entered it flashed on her memory, those with which she was now leaving it struck on her heart: she sunk back in her litter; and the heavy portals of the court closed after her with a loud crash.

They now entered the principal streets of Paris, and Imogen again insensibly raised her head and cast round her eyes. The lamps were not yet burnt out; the patroles of the night were still on duty;

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a few scattered groups of masquers, returning from their nocturnal orgies, were stealing along to their respective homes. As she passed by the hotel de Guise, the porter was unbarring the gates of the outward court; she had often given him money in her frequent visits there: he looked into the litter as she passed, and caught her eye; he bowed low, and a faint benediction met her ear—it was grateful!—and this little circumstance affected her. As she drove by the hotel de Belleisle, she turned away her head; the feelings the sight of it renewed were too painful to be encouraged.

They passed close by the palace of the Louvre. The window of the audience-chamber was open: at that very window she had been presented to Henry the IVth. by the duchess de Guise; at that window she stood, when for the first time her brow was encircled with the diadem of peerage;

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when she beheld the duke de Beauvilliers! —She gazed on this memento of her triumphs and her pleasures, till distance stole it from her view, and tears dimmed her eyes.

They had now passed by all the suburbs, and as they advanced into scenes of rural peace and beauty, Imogen cast back one longing lingering glance, beheld the rising smoke, the lofty towers and pointing spires of Paris, appearing at intervals through the brakes and boles of the surrounding trees; and if one tear of youthful regret fell to the recollection of those festive gaieties, those brilliant pleasures, and splendid triumphs, she had once enjoyed, and now for ever relinquished, many drops of anguish stained her cheek at the goading recollection, that she who had entered Paris a few months back, rich in circumstances, spotless in fame, without one self-reproach rankling at her heart, supported by friend-

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ship, and proud in her own consciousness, was now leaving it with a fortune injured by her own imprudence, a character calumniated by that malice her own unguarded levity had sanctioned, and without one friend to support her in those sufferings of which she had been herself the author.

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CHAP. XXXVII.

" Desolate is the dwelling of Moina—Silence is in
" the house of her fathers."

OSSIAN.

IMOGEN continued to prosecute her solitary journey with an extreme impatience to arrive at its conclusion; but without any interest, except what awakened at the recollection of those objects or scenes which she had passed by with the chevalier, whose just and tasteful remarks still seemed to vibrate in her ear as she contemplated them.

" But how different," said she, " my
" present sensations from those I then ex-
" perienced. Then life flushed upon me
" under a thousand alluring aspects, no-
" velty shed its charm upon every object,

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" expectation pointed to scenes of Elysian
" beauty, and fancy peopled them with
" beings of celestial mould; then all was
" pleasure unalloyed by doubt, and hap-
" piness secured by self-approbation! Such
" I then was! Oh God, what am I now!
" Amiable De Sorville, first and best of
" men, my last and dearest friend, who
" still clung to my ill-fated destiny, until
" I drove thee from me by an imprudence
" you could not prevent, and dared not
" witness; why did I not listen to that
" warning voice of thine, when like a
" guardian spirit you hovered round your
" wayward charge? Why, oh! why did
" I not seize the honour of which I was
" so unworthy, fulfil the wishes of my
" sainted parent, and in the peaceful shades
" of my ancestors lead such a life as hea-
" ven itself approves and delights to be-
" hold?"

To this apostrophe succeeded a train of thought, of a more tender, a more dan-

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gerous nature. But Imogen resisted the sweet and soft solicitations of her heart, and forced her reflections from an object on which they still delighted with hopeless fondness to linger.

Early on the morning of her last day's journey, she sent her page forward to inform her steward of her arrival, to whom she had, previous to her leaving Paris, dispatched a courier.

Towards the decline of a fine spring evening, she beheld for the first time the rising turrets of the chateau de St. Dorval; faintly defined on the deep red glow of the horizon, they rose above the dark woods which surrounded them. The sun was shedding its last beam on the massy clouds which floated in the atmosphere, and seemed portentous of a storm that already murmured along the summit of the highest trees.

All was wild and desolate; the deepening gloom of evening was only at intervals

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illumined by those transient corruscations which shed a livid light on every object, and rather rendered the darkness visible than dispelled it; while the profound silence of the hour was only interrupted by the distant murmur of the mountain torrent, the faint vibration of a convent's deep-toned bell, and the "shard borne "beetle's" drowsy hum, as in his winding course he sung out "night's yawning "peal."

The imagination of Imogen, still susceptible to every impression, was deeply touched by the gloom that surrounded her; while, as her litter proceeded along an avenue of considerable length, cut through the forest of St. Dorval, her mind was absorbed in those awful and solemn sensations the solitude by which she was surrounded, and the contemplation of the ancient residence of her ancestors, visited for the first time under such peculiar circumstances, were calculated to inspire.

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They at last reached the extremity of the avenue, which terminated in an expansive green platform; a deep moat surrounded a high parapet wall, which enclosed a spacious court, whose portals opened at the foot of a draw-bridge: in the midst of the court stood a vast and stately edifice, which, though wrapt in the shades of night, appeared to Imogen of considerable magnitude and extent.

When the fatigued and solitary traveller alighted from her litter, and entered the portals of her chateau, she was surrounded by a group of ancient domestics, who, though now almost past service, enjoyed a comfortable asylum and a small independence, secured to them by the bounty of their late lord. One of them, who had been chief butler for three generations, and now held the place of maitre-d'hotel, or house-steward, advanced at the head of the rest with a flambeau in his hand, which flashed upon the long grey hair that

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shaded his venerable face, and welcomed his lady in a speech of some length and sententious formality, perfectly in character with the stiff and antiquated appearance of the ancient orator; while, as she smilingly replied with that winning condescension which ever fascinates the heart of humble inferiority, the whole venerable group advanced their white heads to catch her accents, shook their grey locks in token of approbation, and with congratulatory tears of joyous emotion followed her up the great hall.

This hall Imogen paused to contemplate. It was eminently spacious, paved with beautiful tesselated marble, and crowned with a vaulted roof of exquisite gothic workmanship, from whence hung suspended by a massy chain a large and ponderous bronze lamp, whose blue light partially dispelled the gloom, and faintly discovered the immensity it was meant to enlighten. The hall terminated in a grand stair-case,

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on the first step of which stood a figure, which presented to the eyes of Imogen a living model of a female of the last century.

"This," (said Geoffry, the old steward) "this good dame, so please my lady, is "our charge d'affaire at the chateau de St. "Dorval, which place she has held thirty "and two years come eve of St. Agnes, "three hours past mid-day. Is it not so, "dame?"

The dame bowed her head in token of assent to Geoffry, and endeavoured to bend her stiff joints into something like a courtsey to Imogen, who kindly taking her by the withered hand, said:

"The long period of your services is "the best proof of your fidelity, and while "I shall make it my endeavour to reward "both, I shall be happy to profit by your "experience and advice in the manage- "ment of my household."

The dame courtseying somewhat lower,

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a faint hectic glowed on her sallow cheek. The domestics exchanged looks of congratulation, and Geoffry in triumph led the way up stairs to the grand saloon.

Imogen, as she ascended, observed that they were of black marble with gilt ballustrades on one side, and a wall on the other, covered with the martial trophies of her ancestors, whose curious workmanship was incrusted with the damp and rust of time; while above them waved the tattered banners of the family, agitated by the blast which at intervals crept through the whole edifice. The stairs terminated in a long gallery, hung with the pictures of the preux chevaliers, and faded beauties of the house of St. Dorval.

At the extremity, Geoffry threw open a pair of massy folding doors, curiously carved with quaint devices, and ushered his lady into a spacious apartment, illumined at the further end by a wood fire, furnished with dark crimson velvet, and hung

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with rich but heavy tapestry. Geoffry, placing a pair of tapers on a black marble slab, beneath a large mirror, dragged over a cumbrous fauteuil, then bowed to Imogen, and said—

" Will not my lady countess take a seat " at the mass, as she must be right weary " after a journey of the Lord knows how " many leagues? This wood is green; I " will go and fetch some dry chips from " the old library."

" But first inform me," (said Imogen, who was leaning at a casement,) " to whom " does that castle belongs west of the fo- " rest?"

" What, lady? from behind which the " moon is now beginning to peep? Why, " 'tis the chateau de Montargis; and though " only divided from us by a branch of the " Durance, we have been for time imme- " morial at variance with its lords."

Although the evening was cold, Imogen opened the sash of the casement—gazed, and sighed.

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"Aye, lady," continued Geoffry, shaking his head, "it is all very true; there "it was your lady's mother resided when "my late lord the count carried her off "from the baron de Montargis. The day "on which he first saw her seems to be "but as yesterday; here was I, in this very "room, arranging some books my young "lord had been reading, when I received "orders to launch the pleasure-boat, and "endeavour to save that of the De Montargis's. Marry, I believe, an my lord "had not ordered it, the heretics should "have sunk for me. Not knowing that "the mother of my lady countess was of "the number, and fair she was to look "upon, although she was wet and dripping, poor soul, as a mermaid. Lady, "you are the living model of her. I "think I see her at this moment, borne "into this room in my lord's arms. Certes, "we marvelled much, whe he visited the "Chateau de Montargis; for till that

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" moment the foot of a St. Dorval had " never crossed the threshold of a De " Montargis, for a century at least.— " Shortly after he carried her away from " the chateau, and she never returned to " it more."

Imogen closed the casement; a chill shuddering crept through her frame.

" It blows a nipping wind," said Geoffry, advancing the arm-chair and closing the curtains.

Imogen perceiving his solicitude, took possession of the chair, and endeavoured to detain him for a considerable time in conversation, which she at first attempted to turn on the state of the chateau and its environs; but her thoughts involuntarily wandered from that of St. Dorval to the chateau de Montargis.

" There were great doings there" (said Geoffry) " on the marriage of the present " duke; you would have thought, lady, " the Durance was all in blaze with the

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" reflection of the illuminations and the
" fire-works ; but matters soon took an-
" other turn there ; for they say the old
" lord grew ill because the king ab-
" jured his heresies, and turned catholic ;
" and he and the young duchess died
" within a week of each other, but not be-
" fore we had a right tilting match with
" the cowardly vassals of Montargis. You
" muſt know, lady, that one of the pol-
" troons spoke with disrespect of our
" house, and called us a set of papiſts
" and traitors ; upon which, we all turned
" out to a man, and met them on their
" own ground ; to be sure the knaves had
" the ıd vantage of us in youth and
" strength, but it would have gone hard
" with them only the present young lord
" appeared before us, and threw himself
" between us, at the risk of his own
" life, and a fine speech he made to con-
" vince us we were all of one religion, and
" all brothers and countrymen, and the

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" like; but it did not do: however, we " gave over for that time. Mass, and I " often thought it were a pity this same " young duke should be a Montargis, for " he is a right valiant gentleman, and " comely to look on withal; besides, that " now he has buried his lady, and that " my lady countess, as 'tis said, has dis- " carded monsieur le Chevalier, whom " I nursed a boy in these arms, and what " with their estates, touching each other " as one may say; and save, indeed, that " the duke is an heretic, and has a diffe- " rent idea of things from what *we* have, " and that *we* never can forget old con- " tentions, which renders the thing mo- " rally impossible."

Geffory, who, struggling between his wishes and his prejudices, had argued himself in and out of an opinion in a breath, here paused abruptly, and Imogen, endeavouring to conceal the emotion his incoherent speech awakened, yet perfectly alive

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to its import, said " Geffory, whoever " informed you that the chevalier de Sor- " ville was discarded by me informed you " wrong; it was his pleasure the alliance " projected by my father should not take " place."

" That is marvellous—passing marvel- " lous, said Geoffry; refuse so fair and " sweet a lady! But then, monsieur le " Chevalier knew my lady was young " enough to be his daughter, and so, may- " hap, he thought it a pity."

Imogen here interrupted Geoffry, to inquire if the duke de Beauvilliers was expected to visit his Chateau soon, and blushed as she asked.

" No, lady," replied Geoffry, " many " of the servants have been lately discharg- " ed, and 'tis said the duke will either live " with his regiment or at court, until he " marries, which I trow will not be long."

The servants now entered to prepare the table for supper; the best of every

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thing the domains of St. Dorval afforded, was spread before their youthful lady, who, surrounded by her grey-headed domestics, rewarded their solicitous attentions by appearing pleased and satisfied with every thing they did. After supper Beatrice and the old *charge d'affaires* attended her to the state bed-room, where every thing was prepared for her reception, in gloomy and solitary grandeur; and Imogen, exhausted by fatigue of body and anxiety of mind, resigned herself to the restorative sweets of repose.

Refreshed by a night of undisturbed slumber, restored and invigorated by the pure and genial air she inhaled, Imogen arose at an early hour the following morning, throwing open the sash of her casement to catch the fragrance of "the incense-breathing morn," and to view the prospects the surrounding scenery afforded. The mists of twilight still rolled like vapoury billows on the plain, or ascended

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in graceful columns from the mountain's rugged side; this was always to the picturesque fancy of Imogen an hour of peculiar interest. She watched the gradual brightning of the day-light tints, the lingering retreat of the morning star, the gradual appearance of innumerable objects, at first but imperfectly discovered, and the glorious rising of the sun as it spread a flood of living light on every side. With those emotions of enthusiasm and delight she was so eminently calculated to feel, she instinctively turned round to express the sublime and heartfelt sensations she experienced; but the words died on her lips; for to whom could she address them?, "And there can be no pleasure without "participation, she mentally exclaimed; "this moment is the sure epitome of "my future life. The blessings of sym-"pathy are for ever denied me; and to "live, neither understanding nor under-"stood—alone, and isolated—to live—

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" Oh surely, to an heart like mine this is " *not to live !*"

She turned despondingly from the casement; the prospect it afforded now awakened no pleasure, and she threw herself on a chair, and wept.

To drive away those melancholy and hopeless reflections that intruded themselves on her mind, and gloomed her imagination, as soon as she had breakfasted she visited every part of the chateau, accompanied by the venerable Geoffry; he led her through every apartment, gallery and corridor, from the front to the rear, shedding an interest over their little tour by relating some incident connected with every spot. The rooms, spacious and kingly, were furnished with a splendor over which, though time had touched them with his decaying hand, an air of taste and magnificence still reigned. Imogen having viewed the interior part of the building, pro-

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ceeded to the lofty battlements and surrounding ramparts.

" Here, lady," said Geoffry, leaning over a bastion on the fragment of a ruined tower, " here, from this spot, it is supposed we have the finest view of the surrounding country that the chateau commands. Here you can trace the boundary of your domain, as though it lay within the compass of your thimble: that snowy point which rises to the north is the mountain of Ventoux, in Dauphiné; that spot on which the sun shines so bright, is the vale of Comptat Venaison: you may see too, just above it, the spires of Avignon; aye, with the help of spectacles, I can discern the golden spire of St. Clair myself; and then to the east, we have the high cliffs and wild rocks of Vaucluse."

" Vaucluse!" repeated Imogen, starting—Am I then so near Vaucluse?"

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"Aye, lady, within three hours ride of "it, and go the longest way you will," replied Geoffry, "though it may be a "hundred leagues off for me, with its "gloomy woods, and noisy water-falls, and "haunted caverns."

An emotion of pleasure, arising from taste, feeling, and an association of remote ideas, now thrilled through the heart of Imogen. The loves, the sorrows of Petrarch and Laura rose on her recollection; and to visit, to frequently visit, that spot sacred to their memories, became the favourite object of her future intentions.

About mid-day her agent arrived from Avignon. Imogen examined with the strictest attention into his books and accounts, applauded the regularity with which they were kept, and informed him that she had now come to reside perhaps for the rest of her life at the chateau de St. Dorval, in the hope of promot-

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ing the happiness and comfort of her tenantry and vassals ; that any plan he could suggest to forward her wishes on that head, she would gratefully adopt, and put into immediate execution. Meantime she requested he would provide the chateau with every requisite for a liberal, but not an extravagant establishment : and having received the most unqualified assurances from the agent (who though a plain was a sensible man) of his intention to aid her in her laudable projects, she received from him a sum of ready money, and he departed.

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CHAP. XXXVIII.

Care selve beate
E voi folinghi e taciturni errori
De reposo e de pacè.
———— Se le stelle
M'avesser dato in sorte,
De viver a-me stesso e di far vita
Conforme alle mil voglie
Io gia co Campi ELISEE :
Fortunate Giardini de SEMEDIE
La vastra ombra gentil non cangeree.
PASTOR FIDO.

THE news of the arrival of the countess de St. Dorval at the residence of her ancestors was no sooner circulated through the neighbourhood, than her tenantry and vassals came in crowds to the chateau to pay their homage to its lady, by whom they were received with a kindness that bordered on affection, and entertained with the plenteous hospitality of feudal times. These

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congratulations were gratefully received. Their complaints were listened to, their grievances redressed, and favours voluntarily awarded them which they had not the courage to demand.

While Imogen endeavoured to form a new code of laws, and become the legislature of her little dominion, encouraging industry, rewarding merit, promoting private felicity and public good, her own domestic system underwent a thorough reform. Methodical without formality, hospitable without extravagance, and economical without parsimony; nothing was wanting, nothing was wasted, and taste and prudence, elegance and liberality, still went hand in hand.

Still considering herself in a state of probation, until she had expiated her errors by evincing the lesson of wisdom and experience she had derived from them, the frugality of her own immediate table, and the extreme simplicity of her dress,

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were now commensurate to their former profusion, luxury, and extravagance; indulging her fancy by resuming the interesting and simple habit of novice of the order of St. Dominick, with the exception of its religious attributes; and wandering during the delightful season of all-reviving spring through the shades of her paternal abode, and led by the hand of charity, visited the humble dwellings of her vassals and tenantry, attending the sick, comforting the unhappy, relieving the distressed, conciliating the inimical, and, with all the gay propensities of her still cheerful disposition, promoting the rural festivity, and participating in the artless joys of her grateful, her almost adoring dependants.

The *old* compared her to all the former ladies of St. Dorval, whose lives tradition had registered, or memory preserved, and confessed she gained by the comparison. The *young* did not compare her to any

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thing, because they believed she was beyond all parallel. All looked upon her as the guardian genius of the soil, and in every heart was erected a shrine to the tutelar idol of its gratitude and its love.

The felicity which Imogen bestowed around her now began, in some degree, to shed a faint irradiation on herself: and the peace, the solitude, the innocence of her life, soothed the irritation of her harassed spirits, and produced a mild and gradual declension from agitation, anxiety, and remorse, to peace, repose, and self-approbation.

But to an heart to which the existence of powerful emotions was so requisite, to a soul capable of the most sublime, the most exquisite feelings, alive to every species of tenderness, of bliss, "a cool suspense from pleasure and from pain" was but little consonant: created either to suffer or enjoy, and both in the extreme; a state of inanity, of apathy, was of all

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others, to the sentient and animated Imogen, the least supportable. Surrounded by those whom the want of education rendered an inferior species of being to herself, and consequently debarred of all social and refined intercourse, she felt herself alone and isolated in the midst of the creation. Not daring to give wing to hope, from experienced disappointment; trembling to unfold the volume of memory, where, among a crowd of recorded ills, many a poignant bliss, traced in imperishable characters, would oppose their sweet recollection to the cold and joyless apathy of her present existence; *forward* she must not, and *backward* she dared not look. She had now passed two months at the chateau, when one morning, as she endeavoured to amuse herself by looking over the books in the library, an odd volume of Petrarch fell in her way; and her conversation on the subject of that author with the duke de Beauvilliers, at the camp,

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of Laon, and her present proximity to Vaucluse, rushed on her memory. Hitherto the duties she had imposed on herself had occupied her mind; but memory, feeling, and taste, now awakened to their former influence, as she perused those plaintive and beautiful sonnets, which were now so consonant to her mind's pensive tone, which recalled the sweet emotion she had felt when first she heard them repeated by the *man she loved*—the sober and home-felt satisfaction she had experienced, in learning to peruse them herself from the mind she esteemed. Warm with the sacred fire of poetical enthusiasm, touched with the afflictions of genius, and the woes of hopeless love, Imogen, in a garden-chair, driven by herself, and followed by Geoffry on a mule, (who looked cotemporary with his rider,) set off on her little pilgrimage to Vaucluse, which lay about three leagues from St. Dorval. Having left the spires of Avignon to the left, she proceeded to the

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valley of Vaucluse, winding along the banks of the river Sorgue, which, stealing its source from the fountain of Vaucluse, meanders through a series of rich and verdant meadows, enamelled with the various and beautiful tints of those flowery plants which skirt its shores, and bathe their glowing heads in its wave.

At the entrance of the delicious vale, Imogen alighted, and gave her little carriage in care to Geoffry, whose aged limbs were but little calculated to follow the elastic step of his youthful lady through the wild wanderings of her tasteful rambles. Impressed, however, with some degree of affectionate anxiety with respect to her safety, and of superstitious awe concerning the sombre shades she was about to visit, he earnestly besought her to accept of the company of the guide who lived at the cottage; but Imogen wanted no other guide than the volume of Petrarch she held in her hand, and no other com-

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panion than her own feelings; and, thankfully declining the suggestion of her servant, impressed with the most interesting sensations she entered alone that enchanting vale, where nature delights to appear under a variety of aspects equally beautiful and sublime, romantic and awful. The sensations of Imogen still changing with the character of those objects which awakened them, she proceeded with delight along the valley's flowery course, until gradually losing its smiling expansion, it narrowed to a gloomy dell, and the verdant green of its enamelled meadows gave place to the sombre drapery of the dark and creeping shrubs which slung their murky wreaths amidst the gloomy foliage of the yew, or stole around the branches of the lofty pine. Awed, yet charmed, the gaze of the solitary wanderer was now arrested by that enormous mass of bold and perpendicular rocks which form a natural barrier to the valley, from

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whose dark recesses flow those innumerable streams which supply the celebrated fountain of Vaucluse. Imogen hung in profound emotion over its expansive and unruffled bosom, darkened with the deep shade of the impending cliffs; then following its course as it stole away by a narrow pass, with the most awful impressions beheld its collected force rushing down a headlong steep in a loud cascade, whose thundering noise, echoed by the surrounding cavities, struck horror on the ear, while its divided streams foamed among detached pieces of rocks, whose grotesque forms rising among the sparkling waves, and covered with aqueous plants, glittering with the feathery spray, amused the eye and interested the fancy of the enthusiast beholder.

As Imogen proceeded she caught an imperfect view of a ruined castle, which hung on the butting point of a distant cliff, and gave the last fine touch of in-

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terest to a scene which checked even the flights of imagination, by including within its magic circle the finest features of the romantic and the picturesque, the beautiful and the sublime.

From the description so accurately given of it by Petrarch, Imogen justly supposed this ruin to be all that remained of the castle belonging to the ancient lords of Avignon, and once the residence of Petrarch's amiable friend, the good and gentle bishop of Cavillon.

Constantly recurring to the volume of Petrarch she held in her hand, every passage she perused shed a profound and tender interest on every object that met her glance.

"And yet," said she, "notwithstanding the coolness of this fountain, the soft gloom of these shades, the peaceful serenity of this scene, so calculated to temper the ardor of an impassioned heart, and sooth the perturbation of a

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"wounded mind, it was probably here, "on this spot, beneath the shelter of "these overhanging and awful cliffs, that "the enamoured and unhappy Petrarch "exclaimed—'I may hide myself among "these rocks, these woods, but alas, there "is no place so wild, so solitary, where the "torments of love do not pursue me'!"

Imogen read this passage aloud, and concluded it with a deep and convulsive sigh that arose not solely from the compassion of Petrarch's woes.

A sigh still louder than her own declared the sympathy of some invisible auditor: shuddering with apprehension, she cast round a quick and timid glance—all was solitary and silent. Imogen endeavoured to recover herself—"It was but "the vibration of the rocks," said she; "those rocks which have so often echoed "to the sighs of hopeless passion." Yet, impressed with a shade of lingering fear, she turned away from the place, and pen-

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sively wandered on, in search of a spot appropriate to the cottage of Petrarch, which he had described as lying between the river and the valley. Fancy soon supplied a site, but of that picturesque *hut*, whose rural simplicity he had likened to the dwelling of Fabricius, not a wreck remained to ascertain the identity of its situation.

Seating herself on a moss-covered bank, which rose on the flowery shores of that clear stream that meandered from the fountain of Vaucluse, and which she felt had still the property ascribed to it by Petrarch, "of giving wings to the imagination," her glowing fancy gave

"To airy nothing a local habitation and a name,"

and assembled before her "mind's eye" the interesting group which formed the simple establishment of the poetical and love-lorn recluse.

The old woman, in whose face he used

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to say all Lybia and Ethiopia were pictured; his ancient fisherman, to whom he had given the epithet of an *aquatic animal*; and his faithful dog, whose good qualities he thought it not beneath his genius to record; she thought she beheld surrounding their master on the opposite shores, while he shared among them his simple fare of nuts and brown bread, on a spot where he declared a voluptuary, who was in search of the greatest delicacies, might be profusely accommodated.

While a new interest every moment awakened in the bosom of Imogen, and she felt herself refreshed by the temporary repose she had taken, she arose to conclude her sentimental pilgrimage by visiting the celebrated cavern of Vaucluse, led towards it by the description of its immortal inhabitant. The sober light of fast-coming evening was stealing its pensive veil o'er the drooping beauties of nature, and displacing the broad glare of meridian splen-

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dour; soft dews fell on every side, and frequent blasts swept along the stilly air, and murmured amidst the foliage of the trees. The reflective melancholy that swelled in the bosom of Imogen (who thought, amidst these awful solitudes, of the inconsequence of those illusive trifles that in the world's busy haunts engaged and distracted her mind) was finely in unison with the pensive tone of her situation; and she approached the entrance of the cavern of Vaucluse full of the most solemn and awful emotions.

This cavern, which seemed hollowed by the hand of Nature, as the last asylum of Despair, even in the cheerful glare of day was not to be visited without emotions of profound awe; and Imogen, alone and in the gloom of evening, shuddered as she crossed its threshold, then retreated, and, blushing at her fanciful weakness, again advanced, led on by interest, by curiosity, and by sentiment. At first all was impe-

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netrable obscurity, till her eye, accustomed to its darkness, obtained the power to observe its singular and natural construction. The spars and petrifactions which hung from its grotesque roof glittered on the gloom as a slanting ray of light darted through a crevice, and partly illumined their beautiful forms; while huge masses of mis-shapen rock projected from its rough-hewn sides, covered with the moss of ages, to which the fancy of Imogen almost attached form and character. As she proceeded with cautious steps and increasing emotion through the deepening cavity far as the eye could pierce the gloom, her awakened imagination gave to what she believed to be a rock the exact contours of a human figure, leaning in a recumbent attitude, and veiled in an adhesive drapery.

While this extraordinary appearance amused her fancy, it insensibly communicated a dread to her mind. Fascinated as if by a spell, she gazed until she almost

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thought the sombre genius of the cavern appeared before her, animating into life and rising into motion; when a wild blast howling through the cave lightly agitated the drapery she had believed to have been of rocky firmness, and the figure, with a scarcely perceptible motion, changed its attitude. With a shriek of horror, and the velocity of a bird, Imogen fled while her trembling limbs were able to support her; then, panting and breathless, sunk at the foot of a tree at no great distance from the entrance to the valley. When something recovered, though still struggling with the impressions of horror, she perceived Geoffry and the guide advancing towards her, and arose to meet them.

"The Virgin and Joseph be praised!" exclaimed Geoffry, "that we see my lady "countess coming safe and well out of "this place; for in good sooth, lady, "when I heard the convent bell of St. "Clair toll for vespers, and saw the shadow

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" of yonder mountain stretching across " the plain, my heart misgave me hugely; " never dreaming that you could take any " pleasure in rambling about so lonely a " place, with such fine parterres and ter- " races of your own at the chateau."

" For my part," said the guide, as they followed Imogen, who hurried on with a quick pace, " though I have been living " at the entrance of the valley since I was " a boy, I would not walk here alone at " this hour to be made an abbot and a " pope to boot; for they say the signor " Petrarch and the lady Laura meet about " this hour in the cavern every evening, " and sing piteous love ditties till the " morning dawns."

Imogen shuddered. There are moments when the strongest efforts of reason are insufficient to destroy the influence of imagination under the power of early superstitious prejudices. The strong mind of Imogen had in its first progression to

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truth and reason destroyed that power, but the images of supernatural horror received on her fancy among the bigoted sisterhood of St. Dominick were not yet totally faded, and she now trembled at what she did not believe; but by one of those efforts of mind by which she always *gave her back herself*, she saw the folly of her childish apprehensions, and supposing it was some solitary wanderer like herself whom she had seen, and who had endeavoured to shun her observation by plunging into the cavern, she in a careless manner asked the guide if she had been the *only* visitor to Vaucluse that day?

"The only one, lady," said the guide, "except, mayhap, the pilgrim who passed "our cottage before you drove up to it; "he might have made it his way towards "Avignon. My dame offered him alms "as he passed her, to pray for the depart-"ed soul of her youngest boy, but he an-swered nought, and walked on as though

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" he did not hear her; upon which my " dame thinks he was bound to a vow of " silence, and was going to the shrine of " Loretto to do penance for some mortal " sin. Mass! she said as how he looked " hugely like a murderer, though certes " she saw nothing of his face, by reason of " his hat (in which was fastened a large " scallop) being flapped in his eyes."

The mystery was now solved. This pilgrim must have been the visitant of the cavern, and Imogen's fears, though they changed their character, still existed; for her proximity to a *murderer* was a more substantial cause of terror than even her silent communion with a being of the other world.

They now reached the cottage door, where Imogen's vehicle stood ready for her reception; and having presented the guide with a piece of money, she drove away, experiencing a mingled thrill of pleasure and of pain from having visited a spot so

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celebrated in the annals of poetry, and which Nature herself seemed to have designed for the retreat of a wounded and sensible heart, the indulgence of hopeless passion, and an asylum for cureless sorrow or wild despair.

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CHAP. XXIX.

Like bright metals on a sullen ground,
My reformation glittering o'er my faults
Shall shew more goodly, and attract more eyes,
Than that which hath no foil to set it off.
SHAKSPEAR.—*Henry IV.*

THE days of Imogen continued to flow mildly on, like the peaceful course of an uninterrupted stream. Gazing, "through "the dark postern of time elapsed," on the tumultuous agitations of her past life, she acquired from the view a just comparative estimate of the halcyon tranquillity of her present situation; and in a placid acquiescence to rational contentment she endeavoured to lull those thrilling recollections which sometimes told her she KNEW that she was happier than she FELT.

While she continued to improve her

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heart by the practice of every virtue, and to enlarge the scale of her ideas by every liberal pursuit, her mind still ascended in progressive excellence towards that perfection it was created to attain, and looked down on its former frivolous engagements and illusive errors with mingled emotions of remorse and contempt: as the vapour which rising from among the mists of the earth sports for a moment on the bosom of a sun-tinged cloud, till borne aloft by its own specific lightness, it at last reaches that pure point of rarefication, where, firm and condensed, it rolls majestically above the nether atmosphere, on whose surface it before but idly floated.

About a week from the period of her sentimental journey to Vaucluse, as Imogen was indulging in one of those solitary rambles along the picturesque shores of the Durance, which gave to her view the twofold interesting prospects of the chateaux de St. Dorval and de Montargis,

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and waked the pensive pleasures of her heart and imagination, she was accosted by one of her own vassals, whose wife, a worthy and industrious young woman, the comfort of an aged father, and the attentive mother of an infant progeny, was lying in the last stage of a decline. Imogen's first inquiry was for the invalid, whom she had often visited since her confinement, and whose life she had protracted (though she could not save) by her attentions.

"Alas! good my lady," replied Justin, "it is all, I fear, nearly over with my poor "Claudine; and so I came to make bold "to request my lady's goodness would "grant the last request of my poor dying "wife."

"If it lies within my power," returned Imogen, "you need not have a doubt of "my inclination, Justin."

"Heaven shower its blessings on your "head, lady!" said Justin, brushing a tear from his sun-burnt cheek; "for

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" surely you were sent as an angel of
" goodness among us. The request then,
" lady, is, that you would visit our poor
" Claudine this evening, for we fear she
" will not pass the night; and while she
" weeps over her father and children, she
" still cries that she should die in peace,
" could she recommend them to the care
" and protection of our lady countess."

" Say no more, Justin," interrupted Imogen eagerly. " You do me injustice
" by supposing I should have a moment's
" hesitation to comply with your request."

She then ordered the page who attended her to fly to the chateau for some cordials and restoratives, and accompanied Justin down the forest pathway which led to his cottage. The last beam of the setting sun lit up its casements as she reached its door. She found the invalid stretched on a mattress, pale, faint, and almost breathless; her head supported on the bosom of her aged father, who wiped away the tears that

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fell from his eyes on her cold white cheek with his long gray hair; her right arm was entwined round the neck of a little girl, who seemed to weep rather from sympathy than from a consciousness of her loss; while her left was held out to a person in the habit of a pilgrim, who appeared anxious to catch a hope from the pulse he sought, but that now faintly fluttered with the throb of life. Another in the same habit, but of loftier stature, sat in the shade of the little room, with a cherub boy on his knee, while its infant brother sported at his feet, and played with his staff.

Imogen, though struck by the unexpected appearance of the singular-looking strangers, as the cavern of Vaucluse flashed across her recollection, was yet too much affected by the melancholy scene she witnessed to give any play to idle curiosity. As she advanced towards the invalid, the pilgrim modestly withdrew, and Imogen

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took his place by the bed, and took the hand he held in hers; while, in the softest accents of tenderness and humanity, she addressed the patient. The countenance of the dying woman as it turned towards Imogen brightened with a momentary gleam, a faint hectic flushed her cheek, and her dim and beamless eye was suddenly lit up with the lambent flame of hope and satisfaction. She pressed the hand of Imogen, and endeavoured to speak, but articulation was fled; and her eyes, as they wandered from her aged parent to her infant offspring, and then, swimming in tears, were raised to the face of Imogen, alone spoke the feelings and wishes of her soul.

"Let thy heart rest in peace," said Imogen in tender emotion; "thy father "shall be my father, and thy children my "children."

The invalid raised herself on the bosom of her parent, a deeper blush glowed on her cheek, a smile of seraphic expression

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played on her countenance; she clasped the hands of Imogen in hers, cast round a glance that seemed to include within its view all that was dear to her on earth; then fixing her eyes on her father she closed them for ever.

Imogen arose. She wept, nor did she conceal her tears; for the tear of sympathy to the feelings of the afflicted is gracious as the dew of heaven to the decayed and withering plant. But she respected the sacred sorrows of the husband and the father; and she retired in silence, leading away in either hand a child of the deceased. Her laquais and page were in waiting at the threshold of the door, which as she passed the pilgrims bowed to her with almost lowly reverence. Imogen courteously returned their salute; and having ordered the page to leave behind the wines and cordials he had brought to the cottage, returned with her two innocent companions to the château de St. Dorval, each

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borne in the arms of her domestics. As soon as she reached home, she gave her adopted children in care to the old *chargé d'affaires* and Beatrice; then throwing herself on a couch in the large Gothic saloon, where she chiefly sat, and which was then partially illumined with the beams of a rising moon, she resigned herself to that train of sublime and awful reflection the solemn and affecting scene she had lately witnessed was calculated to inspire. Thought soared beyond the boundaries of mortal life, and hope pointed its flight to the regions of eternity. While Imogen still continued wrapt in the sublimity of divine reflection, Geoffry entered the room, and having drawn close the heavy window-curtains, and placed lights on her reading-table, he informed her that the two pilgrims whom she had lately seen in Justin's, one of whom had been for some days attending Claudine, were then in the great hall below, and had entreated him to bear

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their humble supplication to his lady that she would graciously condescend to grant them a few minute's audience: "Upon "which," added Geoffry, "I flatly said "them nay, seeing the unseasonableness "of the hour. Albeit, I do believe them, "lady, to be right reverend pilgrims; for "a power of good has one of them done, "who seems to be the elder of the two, "during the week or so they have been "loitering about the neighbourhood, as "touching the performance of divers cures "and the like; yet, marry, no one is a whit "the wiser where they dwell nor how they "live, for food nor lodging take they "from those who offer; nor do they ever "shew their heads from under those same "great cowls of theirs, which makes us "all to think 'tis not for nothing they do "such woeful penance."

"And wait they still, Geoffry?" demanded Imogen in surprise.

"Aye, marry, do they, lady."

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"Then I will see them," said Imogen; "they may want my assistance themselves, "or, on the privilege of their holy charac- "ters, they may come to solicit it in be- "half of others: perhaps 'tis from Justin "they come. Shew them up then, good "Geoffry, and wait thyself in the anti- "chamber."

Geoffry retired, muttering a blessing on her head, and in a few minutes returned, ushering in the strangers, then left the room.

The dim light which a pair of wax tapers shed through the vast and gloomy apartment gave a shadowy and spectral appearance to the tall figures which now presented themselves to the eye of Imogen; and an indescribable emotion of terror would have prompted her to have recalled her servant, but that the conscious puerility of her fears deterred her. She returned, therefore, the humble salute of the strangers with her usual courtesy, and en-

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quired into the nature of their demands with that sweetness of voice and countenance which always accompanied the hope of performing a benevolent action.

One of them replied: "Lady, we are "penitent sinners on a pilgrimage to the "shrine of our tutelar saint for crimes "which——"

"*Crimes!*" involuntarily repeated Imogen shuddering.

"Crimes," said the pilgrim meekly, "which we hope are not beyond redemption, and which we trust our arduous "pilgrimage will expiate."

"To suppose it," said Imogen, with the air and voice of an admonishing angel, "were to ascribe to the Deity the weakest "of human frailties, and to present to "man the most dangerous of human examples; for is the justice of heaven to be "bribed by a trivial penance, foreign to "the error you would retribute? and is

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" vice to be discouraged by presenting so " easy a mode of expiation for every " crime? Oh! if you would indeed evince " the contrition of your soul, repair the " fault by which it has been awakened: " if thou hast defrauded, restore that thou " hast unlawfully taken; if thou hast " slandered, clear the fame thou hast wan- " tonly stained. Whatever has been the " nature of thy crime, let thy expiation " be proportioned to its extent and thy " ability: then turn to thine own heart, it " will absolve thee; then appeal for mercy " to thy God, and he will hear thee."

The pilgrims bowed lowly, let fall their staves within their arms, and turned round as if to depart.

" Yet stay," said Imogen, mildly and with a faint smile; " to give mere advice " where benefits of a more solid nature " are probably expected is the hacknied " trick of those who bestow what is al-

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"ways so easy to spare. I, however, do "not mean to add *refusal* to *reproof*. "Speak! in what manner can I serve "you?" and she took out her purse.

The pilgrims approached a few steps. Imogen arose, and advancing towards them said: "I must however confess I "should much rather assist you to repair "your fault than to perform that pil- "grimage by which you hope for its ex- "piation."

"*Our pilgrimage* is already made," returned the pilgrim. "That it is an *ex-* "*piatory* one remains for thee, sweet saint, "to determine."

The cowls of the prostrate strangers fell back on their shoulders, and Imogen beheld at her feet the duke de Beauvilliers and the chevalier de Sorville. Pale and lifeless, she fell in their extended arms. When she recovered she found herself seated on a couch, her head supported on the bosom of de Sorville, the venerable

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Geoffry holding a glass of water to her lips, that trembled in his grasp, and the duke de Beauvilliers kneeling at her feet, with one of her hands clasped in his. To the bewildered imagination of Imogen all was for a moment like the "baseless fabric "of a vision;" and even the group which surrounded her appeared but as the phantoms of her own disordered imagination. It was the well-known voice of De Sorville that first brought home the sweet conviction to her senses that this soul-reviving spectacle was not the mere glowing dream of fancy, but the sweet accomplishment of all her heart's dearest wishes.

"Canst thou," said De Sorville, "oh, "Imogen, forgive your friends thus self-"ishly purchasing the gratification of their "own feelings at the expence of thine? "Canst thou forgive this abrupt intru-"sion and the imposition which pre-"ceded it?"

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"Can I?" faintly exclaimed Imogen, while a blush mantled on her cheek, and her timid glances, bathed in tears, were fixed on the earth: "Can I? oh! I am "not worthy, I am not"—and the words died on her faultering lips.

"Thou are worthy of the most exalted "esteem, the most ardent love," said De Sorville; and with an air of paternal tenderness he folded her to his bosom. The duke de Beauvilliers dropt her hand, started from her feet, and walked to the other end of the room: while Geoffry, recovering from his amazement the metamorphosis he had witnessed excited, begged to be indulged in an hearty laugh that shook his sides, and rubbing his hands together joyfully exclaimed, "Mass! an this be not the "most curious device and the best played "withal that ever my old eyes witnessed. "Holy rood! who would ever have sus-"pected monsieur le chevalier for such a "piece of waggery, for when thou wert a

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" younker, monsieur, (under submission be
" it spoken) thou wert but little given to
" mirth or merriment; save once indeed
" which well I do remember me; 'twas
" when, with my late lord the count, thou
" didst return from college, a right plea-
" sant advice didst thou enact. The story
" runs thus."

" But the story at present runs thus,
" my good Geoffry," interrupted the che-
valier gaily. " We have been wandering
" about your forest all day under a vow of
" abstinence, you know; but as our pe-
" nance is now over, and your air is keen,
" we wish to try the strength of your forces
" in the buttery and the larder; so, mon-
" sieur Geoffry, sound the trumpet of alarm
" in your banqueting room as soon as you
" please, and you will find us ready for the
" attack; and as for your anecdote of my
" solitary frolic we will reserve that as a
" *bon bouche* for a future moment."

" Right, monsieur, right," returned

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Geoffry, "and I will convince your wor-
"ship in a trice that neither our woods nor
"our ponds are deserted since you and my
"late lord, the count, used to sally forth,
"at the morning dawn, with your nets
"and your guns. And as for our wines, I
"challenge all the chateaux on both sides
"the Durance to shew such a cellar." Here Geoffry looked round to the duke de Beauvilliers, and bowing low he added: "and,
"with my lady's good will, there is not a
"living soul in the chateau to-night but
"shall try its strength in drinking pros-
"perity to the noble houses of St. Dorval
"and Montargis."

"Well said, Geoffry," returned De Sorville, "and your lady, the duke, and my-
"self, will pledge you with all our souls."

"I warrant you, monsieur," said Geoffry, rubbing his hands: "the saints be thanked,
"say I, for this blessed night, for this is a
"sight my aged eyes did never hope to
"open on;" and he bowed low to the

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duke, adding: "and now, with my lady's "good pleasure, I'll go down to the hall "and make known this joyful event to my "fellow-servants." Imogen faintly smiled assent, and having in some degree recovered her presence of mind during the interval the loquacity of Geoffry afforded her, as soon as he had retired she arose, and with an air of dignity and grace welcomed her illustrious guests to the chateau de St. Dorval; who, invited by her expressive but timid glance, took each a seat on either side of their fair hostess. The pause which for a few minutes ensued was delicate and distressing. The ardent gaze of her guests were riveted on the blushing face of Imogen, who again, though in a confused manner, expressed the happiness this unexpected visit conferred on her, while, as she stole a glance at the duke, the vision of Vaucluse rushed to her recollection.

"Take care," said the chevalier, smiling; "you know not the danger which

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" may lurk in this cordial welcome. For " my part it is scarcely necessary to say " more to render me your guest for life; " and for the duke I doubt but he will " plead his military privilege, and make the " chateau de St. Dorval his head-quarters " while he remains in Provence."

" Inclination would, doubtless, lead me " to endow myself with such a precious " immunity," said the duke, coldly; " but " as I shall leave Provence immediately, I " shall proceed this night to the chateau " de Montargis."

" What! my lord," said the chevalier gaily, " after having made our pilgrimage " together, will you desert your brother vo- " tarist at the shrine of our mutual devo- " tion? Behold the propitious smile that " lurks on the lip of our fair saint. Can " you resist its influence?"

" There are such things as pious frauds," said the duke, with a forced smile, and rising from his seat.

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" Yet happy, 'tis not holy cheats you " fear, my lord, but temporal dangers. " Come, confess you cherish an hereditary " suspicion of your hereditary enemy. But " what have you to fear from treachery " while thus I preserve an armed neutra- " lity between you?" and the chevalier rising took the hand of de Beauvilliers, and leading him towards Imogen placed it in hers; then added, " and thus I secure an " armistice, sanctified by all the sacred laws " of hospitality."

The duke, bending one knee, pressed the hand presented to him to his lips; then turning to the chevalier with the strongest emotion, he endeavoured to veil under an ill-affected air of raillery, he exclaimed: " Whatever may be the result of my rash " confidence, it is you who must be an- " swerable for the effects, for I am no lon- " ger any thing but the thing you would " have me."

" Be it so," said the chevalier; " I

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"pledge myself for your safety. But away "with suspicion; be the felicity of this "moment illusive or real, let us enjoy it, "while it lasts."

"Agreed," said the duke, with an air of vehement gaiety; "for be it real or illu- "sive, it is still felicity;" and he resumed his seat.

"And to what fortunate circumstance "am I indebted for the happiness I now "enjoy?" said Imogen, who had listened in silent agitation to the foregoing dialogue; "at a moment when I believed you, my "dear chevalier, were in England; at a "moment when I thought myself lost to "your remembrance, and unworthy of "preserving it?"

The recollection of all she had suf- fered since she last beheld him rushed to her memory, and the tears involuntarily sprung to her eyes.

The chevalier, though deeply affected, replied in a grave and firm voice: "Lady,

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" the cause which has led me this night
" into your presence is the same which has
" influenced every action of my life since I
" knew you !—Yourself !—Hear me then,
" lady; give me for a few minutes thy pa-
" tient attention, then judge of me as I am,
" not as I must lately have appeared to
" you—the deserter of her whom the world
" had deserted. Deep versed in every
" feature of that interesting character I had
" with so much scrutiny, with so much
" delight, made the object of my peculiar
" observance, acquainted with the elevated
" qualities of thy soul, the proud ambi-
" tion of thy mind, the warmth and ardour
" of thy feelings, the strength and tender-
" ness of thy affections, and the irritable
" sensibility, the fire, the enthusiasm of
" thy sanguine disposition, I beheld you
" rush upon the world endowed with all
" those qualities, and capable of leading
" to the most seraphic virtues; but, if ac-
" accompanied by prudence and common

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" sense, capable of leading to the most dan-
" gerous errors. I beheld you unsophis-
" ticated and all-confiding, generous, vo-
" latile, and ambitious, enter the great
" theatre of life. Anxious to play your
" own conspicuous part among a jealous
" crowd of rival actors, enchanted with its
" gay illusions, the willing victim of its
" splendid cheats, deceived by an appear-
" ance, soothed by a smile, repulsed by a
" frown, won by the faintest gleam of sym-
" pathy, repelled by the faintest shadow of
" dissimilarity, the being of impulse, every
" impression was received with a vivacity
" that exposed you to a train of evils.
" Dreading to be feared, you shunned the
" attainment of respect; anxious to be
" loved, you pursued the object of your
" wishes through the medium of your ad-
" miration, and lost it. Justly estimating
" the treasures of genius, you displayed
" your own; and when you thought
" yourself adored for its possession, you

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" were envied, hated, and traduced. Oh
" Imogen! thy beauty might have been
" pardoned thee; thy graces forgiven;
" but that genius which elevated thee
" above the ordinary level of thy species,
" and raised thee above the vulgar errors
" and vulgar prejudices, the false taste and
" false opinions of the world; those ta-
" lents which set the competitorship of
" your own sex at defiance, and even
" awakened the rivalry of ours, raised
" against you woman's deadliest foe—Envy;
" whose destructive shaft, like the Indian's
" fire-tipt arrow, divides as it flies into
" countless streams of unextinguishable
" flame, each fatal to its object. Charmed
" with that in others by which you blindly
" believed you charmed yourself, genius
" was always received with open arms
" without the union of virtue to recom-
" mend it. The tone of your character
" was soon understood by the interested
" and the vicious; and artifice and dupli-

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"city soon learnt to produce those vibra-
"tions which sounded best in unison with
"their own selfish desires. Every hour
"heaping fresh fuel on the altar of envy,
"by the proud display of those talents po-
"licy should have taught you to conceal;
"every moment furnishing the insatiate
"appetite of slander with that nutriment
"your own unguarded conduct prepared;
"resigning your domestic circumstances
"into the hands of mercenary strangers,
"and your conduct to the guidance of the
"giddy or the artful; you rushed on to
"ruin. Yet the warning voice of friend-
"ship still pursued you; but habituated
"to its monstrous murmur, it was soon
"heard without emotion, or listened to
"without effect. Then I felt the necessity
"of some desperate effort which should
"rouse the dormant faculties of your
"slumbering reason: I addressed myself
"to your feelings in a manner that did
"violence to my own; apparently aban-

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" doned you for ever, and it was generally
" believed that I had left Paris for Eng-
" land when I only retired with the duke de
" Beauvilliers to his villa in the neighbour-
" hood of St. Denis. I knew that Imo-
" gen, without the hope of dependance
" but what her own mind afforded, would
" find within herself an infinite resource;
" and that genius, like a Phœnix triumph-
" ing amidst the flames, would rise victo-
" rious above the ruins of self-destroyed
" prosperity. To witness her triumph, to
" assist her in the subordinate means of ef-
" fecting it, I adopted an impenetrable dis-
" guise, and appeared before her as a jewish
" usurer. It was then, oh! Imogen, the
" goodness of your heart, the rectitude of
" your principles, and the fertility of your
" genius, became, for the first time, truly
" known to me; and while I acted as the
" unsuspected agent of your divine endea-
" vours in favour of justice, humanity, and
" virtue, a thousand times was I on the

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" point of throwing myself at your feet
" and adoring that virtue I once dared
" to arraign. A mere *Proteus* in friend-
" ship, my next metamorphosis was in the
" character of a physician. Then, Imogen,
" I became the witness of the most affect-
" ing of all human spectacles; I beheld thee
" the victim of the world's ingratitude,
" and thy own sensibility, deprived of rea-
" son, stretched on the bed of sickness;
" alone, comfortless, and forlorn; thy
" beauty faded, and thy genius fled.
" Where was then the crowd which lately
" bowed at the shrine of thy charms?
" Where was then the multitude that made
" thee the popular idol of its homage?
" Alas! not one solitary votarist survived the
" apparent wreck of thy golden prosperity.
" But let thy heart triumph to learn that,
" amidst the herd of flatterers who surround-
" ed thee, thou didst secure one invaluable
" and disinterested friend, who found an
" excuse for thy errors in their close alli-

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" ance with thy virtues—who was always
" active, but never obvious, in his wishes
" to serve you; whose interest obtained for
" you the title of your ancestors; whose
" kindness enabled you to defray your debt
" of gratitude to the page of Montmo-
" rell; who watched over you with the
" solicitude of a brother, yet assumed
" not even the privileges of an acquaint-
" ance; and who, laying aside the here-
" ditary prejudices of his family, now
" visits the chateau de St. Dorval, to wit-
" ness the virtuous triumph of its mistress,
" and the felicity of his friend—need I
" name the duke de Beauvilliers?—Nay,
" my lord, I *must* be heard. To what
" purpose would you still affect conceal-
" ment? To what purpose, indeed, was it
" ever assumed, except that in an age when
" virtue is obsolete, you blush for your sin-
" gularity; and that you suspected few
" would give you credit for the honour-
" able and disinterested sentiments which

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" influenced your generous friendship for
" the young and lovely countess of St.
" Dorval.—But to continue: as soon as the
" recovery of my charming patient enabled
" her to travel, I pursued her steps until
" I beheld her safely lodged in the chateau
" de St. Dorval; and then, in conformity
" with a promise made to the duke de
" Beauvilliers, I joined him in Bretagne,
" where he was stationed with his regi-
" ment; but though I was determined
" not to dispute with you the participation
" of that triumph you were gaining over
" every human frailty by the unassisted
" energy of your own mind, think not that
" for a moment I resigned my interest in
" my precious charge; no, I established a
" regular correspondence with your *Proven-*
" *çal agent*, and received constant and cir-
" cumstantial accounts of your progressive
" attainment of every excellence; until the
" period of your probation being expired,
" I informed the duke of my intention to

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" visit Provence, or rather to make a pil-
" grimage of the heart to the shrine of
" virtue in its fairest form. Business of a
" particular nature called the duke at the
" same time to Avignon, and as he did
" not wish to make a public appearance,
" we determined to take up our residence
" *incog.* at the villa of the duke's agent,
" who resides in the vale of Comptat Be-
" naison. Anxious to observe you, with-
" out being myself observed, I engaged in
" all those sacred offices dear to benevo-
" lence, performing those duties imposed
" by humanity. Under the sanction of a
" pilgrim's garb, and with the help of a
" little medical skill, I obtained an easy ad-
" mission into the house of mourning, the
" abode of misery, or the dwelling of dis-
" ease; and there I still traced the track of
" thy footstep—there I still caught the re-
" verberated blessing which echoed from
" lip to lip when thy name was pronounc-
" ed; and found thy eulogium flowing from

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"every heart. The duke, to whom I used
"sometimes to recount the various inter-
"esting little anecdotes my wanderings af-
"forded, and always fond of tracing nature
"to those simple haunts where she appears
"least modified by art and worldly forms,
"adopted a similar disguise with that I
"had chosen; and we haunted together
"for more than a week the neighbourhoods
"of de Montargis and St. Dorval, some-
"times botanizing among the mountains,
"but oftener studying the character of the
"ancient Provençals in the simple con-
"versation and manners of their unso-
"phisticated descendants. This evening,
"which I intended should be the last of
"our adventure, as we were returning to
"the villa of our host, the cry of misery
"reached us from the cottage of Justin, as
"we passed near it, and we met the un-
"fortunate husband of the dying Claudine
"flying for relief to her whom he believed
"under heaven alone could dispense it.

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" Need I dwell on the affecting scene
" that followed? Need I add that the
" friends of Imogen could no longer resist
" throwing themselves at her feet, and
" adoring those virtues whose divine exer-
" tions they had witnessed? Oh, Imogen!
" the last year of thy life will, I trust,
" prove the guiding moral of thy future
" existence. The danger of a boundless
" ambition for unrivalled superiority in the
" female character thou hast already fatally
" experienced; and the insufficiency of
" genius unaccompanied by prudence, by
" that anticipating perception of the effects
" and consequences of our actions, even
" independent of their motives, to conduct
" its possessor through the world with
" safety and happiness, you have practi-
" cally learned. But if the principles
" which govern your present extend to
" your future life, you may look upon the
" errors of the past without remorse, and
" esteem them but as the price paid by the

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" frailty of human nature for the purchase " of wisdom, virtue, and experience."

The chevalier ceased to speak: the conflict of varying emotions which had assailed the heart of Imogen, while with breathless attention she hung upon his detail, still seemed to enchain her faculties, and bade defiance to the articulation of those feelings which agitated her mind. The gratitude, the amazement, with which she had learnt that the liberal usurer, the solicitous physician, was still the friend of her life, and the guardian of her safety, had not yet withdrawn their strong expression from her face, while the certainty that de Sorville had had a coadjutor in his tenderness and anxiety for his ward, communicated an emotion of rapture to her heart, whose cause she scarcely understood, and dared not to investigate; and a sense of the great obligations she owed to his generous, though concealed exertions, overwhelmed her with gratitude and confusion.

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After an uninterrupted pause of some minutes, Imogen addressed herself to her guardian: her voice, at first broken and inarticulate, gradually breathed a firmer tone; the perturbation of her air subsided; sighs no longer impeded her utterance, nor tears dimmed the expression of her eyes; from the grace and eloquence of animated gestures, she gave a superadded existence to her words; and while, with the meek supplication of a penitent, she endeavoured to extenuate her frailties, she awakened admiration, and elicited esteem. She began by tracing the errors of her life to their primary source, and found it in the nature of her education at the convent of St. Dominick.

"We are all," said she, "in a degree, "the beings of early habits and education: "the faintest impression in the first era of "existence frequently gives a feature to "the character, which becomes the leading "trait of future life; and the remotest as-

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" sociation of ideas communicates a tinge
" to the mind, which forms the predomi-
" nant colouring of our future actions. It
" was amidst the cloisteral privacy of St.
" Dominick, the supposed school of rigid
" self-denial, where all human passion is
" thought to stand subdued, and religion
" to trample upon the faculties of nature,
" that ambition's strongest root was plant-
" ed in my youthful bosom; and the germ
" of vanity nurtured in my mind by those
" who, deceiving the world and them-
" selves, part not with the propensities in-
" cident to their nature, but only change
" the objects which would have engrossed
" them in the world, for others of a differ-
" ent, but not a more laudable character.
" The proud desire of adding a new saint
" to their convent list dimmed the small
" portion of penetration bigotted igno-
" rance had left to the sisterhood among
" whom I was reared; and mistaking the
" ardor and enthusiasm of my character

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" for the inspirations of heavenly grace,
" they made me the medium of their own
" pious ambition, and unconsciously awak-
" ened mine beyond all power of ex-
" tinction. I Wondered at for those talents
" which were only eminent by compari-
" son; revered for that piety which was
" the child of my imagination rather than
" the offspring of my reason, no voice was
" grateful to my ear that spoke not in the
" language of praise; no accent reached
" my heart but through the medium of
" vanity. Removed from the Convent of
" St. Dominick to the Chateau de Mont-
" morell, a new source of ambition was
" opened to my views: opposed, oppress-
" ed, repeated victories easily obtained
" over baseless arguments, or illiberal opi-
" nions, confirmed my ruling passion,
" while a species of heroism awakened in
" my soul to the touch of tyranny; and,
" like the palm-tree, I rose in my own
" estimation proportionably to the efforts

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" made to subdue me. A succession of " unexpected circumstances (here Imogen. " hesitated and blushed) opened some new " springs of emulation in my mind; and " the fond approbation of a doating partial " father, the friendship and affection of a " Chevalier de Sorville, operated as a new " stimulus to new exertions and new views. " Thus dangerously organised, I rushed " upon life: sweet, indeed, were the illu- " sive visions of my heart and imagination " —but transient as sweet.

" Thus far, my best friend, have I en- " deavoured to trace the source of that " fatal ambition which you have looked " upon to be the accessory to that train of " evils by which my worldly noviciate was " pursued; but for that abandonment of " social prudence, that neglect of domestic " duty by which I unhappily involved the " fate of others in my own, I have no exte- " nuation to offer. Prudence should be " the governing principle of woman's exist-

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" ence; domestic life her peculiar sphere;
" no genius, no talents, no rank, can ex-
" empt her from an observance of the laws
" of the former, from an attention to the
" duties of the latter. To neglect both,
" is to violate the sacred laws of social
" happiness; and to frustrate the all-wise
" intentions of that Providence who framed
" them. Such, I feel, is the theory of
" that truly feminine virtue which I have
" hitherto far from observed—but its illus-
" tration will, I hope, be traced in the con-
" duct of my future life."

Imogen for a moment paused; her colour changed; a slight convulsion passed across her features; some secret struggle seemed to shake her soul; but the conflict was transient; her emotion subsided: calm and dignified, yet with averted eyes, a blushing cheek, and a low and tremulous accent, she turned towards the duke de Beauvilliers. " To you, my lord," she said, " my
" obligations are of a nature not to be

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" expressed or acquitted by a few words. " The interest you have taken in my self- " created sufferings; the generous exer- " tions you have made in my favour; the " solicitous friendship with which, un- " known and unsuspected, you have watch- " ed over the late vicissitudes of my life, " have awakened a sentiment in my heart " which can only cease to exist when that " heart ceases to throb—a sentiment pure, " lively, and indelible, and formed of the " best emotions of gratitude, respect, " esteem, and friendship." Then turning towards the chevalier, her cheeks' warm blush faded to a deadly paleness; her eyes bathed in tears, her voice faint and inarticulate, she added: " Oh! thou beloved " friend of my father, saviour of my peace, " my honour, and my life, whom neither " my follies nor my errors, my impru- " dence nor my ingratitude, could wean " from the watchful care of thy unworthy

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" charge; knowing what she has been, " can you accept of her as she is? or, still " rejected as your wife, is she now only " sought as your friend?"

The existence of the agitated Imogen seemed to hang upon the question, as pale, panting, and breathless, she hid her face in her bosom, and extended her trembling hands to De Sorville.

The chevalier, seizing them, and falling at her feet, replied: " Be this my an- " swer: Imogen, beloved even in all thy " errors, in all thy virtues, thou art now " adored."

Imogen, faint and overcome, sunk lifeless on his shoulder, while the tears that flowed from her eyes relieved the dreadful oppression of her heart; yet she wept not alone, for the cheek which pressed hers was wet with a tear her eye had not shed. The chevalier at length arose, and turned towards the duke, who was leaning against

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the mantle-piece, his head enveloped in his cloak.

" Great and amiable friend," said De Sorville, tenderly embracing him, " witness of my sufferings, witness of my felicity, give me your congratulations, for " they are yet wanting to my happiness."

" You have them," returned the duke, with a voice dignified and firm.

The chevalier looked on him for a moment, then taking him by the hand, led him towards Imogen. " And have you," he exclaimed, " nothing to say to the novice of St. Dominick."

The minstrel of Provence fell at her feet.

" To the captive of Laon," added De Sorville, with a smile.

De Montargis covered the hand of Imogen with impassioned kisses.

" To the wife of your friend," continued the chevalier.

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The duke de Beauvilliers arose; an air of virtue, dignity, and pride, involved his whole form, yet still his emotions did not permit him to speak: he threw himself into the arms of De Sorville, but their embrace was of a different character from the first.

De Sorville, leading the duke to the couch where Imogen sat, placed him beside her; then resuming his own seat, to relieve the delicacy of their situation, he gave a new turn to the conversation, and informed Imogen that the purchases made by the counterfeit Jew had been long since conveyed back to the hotel de St. Dorval.

"Then I am still a debtor," said Imogen with a faint smile, "but who is now my "creditor?"

"Oh! of that hereafter," said the chevalier, looking over at the duke, who changed colour.

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Imogen's eyes followed those of De Sorville, and she caught the infection of De Beauvilliers' confusion.

"The principal," said she, smiling, "I "can easily pay off, for my treasury at "present would form a little subsidy for a "German prince; but the interest which "gratitude imposes can never be defray-"ed, but with every hour of my life must "continue to accumulate."

At that moment Geoffry entered to announce supper. Imogen arose, and presented her hand to De Sorville, who placing it in that of the duke, gaily exclaimed: "Come, my lord, over the rites of hos-"pitality even the family feuds of other "times held no jurisdiction; and while "you thus lead your hereditary enemy to "the banquet, you lay a foundation for an "inviolable hereditary friendship."

Imogen endeavoured to smile, and the duke, with an hand that still trembled to

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the touch of hers, led her in silence to the *sallon a manger*.

Imogen vainly endeavoured to do the honours of her table with her usual ease and grace. She spoke but little, eat less, and, thoughtful and abstracted, seemed unconscious of the sighs that breathed on her lips. The duke trifled with his knife and fork, and touched nothing; but eagerly quaffed off repeated draughts of wine; talked much, and on the most indifferent subjects, with vehemence and passion, or sunk at intervals into profound and melancholy reveries. The chevalier alone preserved the wonted equanimity of his manner; finished the broken sentences of the agitated Imogen, as if he anticipated all she would have said; or explained the wild and incoherent sentiments of the duke, when he was scarcely understood by himself.

The free circulation of the sparkling

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goblet, the disordered air, burning cheek, and flashing eyes of De Beauvilliers, soon warned Imogen to depart; and having paid the salutations of the night to her illustrious guests, she retired to her own apartment.

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CHAP. XL.

To chase each partial purpose from his breast,
And thro' the mists of passion and of sense,
And thro' the tossing tide of chance and pain,
To hold his course unfaltering; while the voice
Of Truth and Virtue, up the steep ascent
Of Nature, calls him to his great reward,
Th' applauding smile of Heaven."

AKENSIDE.

Oh! che felice pianti,
Che amibile martis,
Pur che si possa dir,
Quil cor e mio.
De due bell alme amante,
Un alme,allor si fa,
Un alme che non ha,
Che un sol desio.

METASTASIO.

AT an early hour the following morning Beatrice entered her lady's room, to preside as usual at her toilet, but found her

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already risen and dressed, although she had heard her pacing the adjoining apartment, which lay over her own, until a very late hour. Beatrice observed also that she was just dressed as if she had not divested herself of a single article since she had last seen her; and as she had been forbid attending her to bed (a thing most unusual), she was now full of anxious curiosity with respect to the strange incidents of the preceding evening, which had afforded such ample matter of wonder and surmise to every domestic member of the chateau, to herself in particular; and she had just began with,

"Well, good my lady, there is no end "to wonderments and miracles in this "world, as monsieur Geoffry said last "night, with respect to the appearance "of monseigneur the duke within the "walls of the chateau de St. Dorval—"

When Imogen, taking the veil she held in her hand, slung it over her own head

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so as to conceal the upper part of her face, and left the room; but not before Beatrice had observed that her cheek was colourless, her eye red and swoln, and her looks haggard and melancholy. Beatrice looked after her lady with tearful eyes, then sat down on the chair from which Imogen had risen, and wept the effects, though ignorant of the cause.

Imogen, after a few turns on the terrace, entered the saloon: she found the chevalier already there, walking up and down the room, and conversing with old Geoffry, who was laying out the breakfast table. When Imogen appeared, he sprung forward to receive her; and gazing on the face she endeavoured to veil from his penetration, he stifled an half-breathed sigh, took her hand in silence, and pressed it to his lips.

At that moment the duke entered the room: he would have retired unperceived, but the chevalier's quick eye catching a

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glimpse of him in a large mirror which hung opposite the door, he exclaimed,

"Come back, my lord, the countess has "another hand for you."

The duke returned, and coldly bowed on the hand presented to him by the chevalier.

In the appearance of De Beauvilliers a visible change had taken place since the preceding night; the artificial flow of spirits which had then animated his manners now no longer enlivened them; his air was abstracted, his eyes sunken, his complection livid, and the expression of his countenance wild and despairing.

"It is a pity," said the chevalier, as they seated themselves at the breakfast table, "it is a pity that the motive of an "action should not always influence its "effects. I told you last night, my lord, "when you were quaffing off such plen-"teous draughts to the health and happi-"ness of your friends, that you would

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" this morning pay the same tribute to
" the god of ebricty for the violation of
" his laws, as the selfish intemperate who
" commits his excesses uninfluenced by
" any such generous and social motives:
" and if I am to judge from your looks
" this morning, my assertion was pro-
" phetic."

The duke, rousing from the sullen torpor which had hitherto involved him, with a forced laugh and an air of gaiety replied:

" Why, yes, I believe I was rather in
" an Anacreontic mood last night; and, to
" confess the truth, I often thought the
" philosophy of the Teen bard the only
" true philosophy upon earth: while the
" sage pores by the midnight lamp over
" the musty volumes of distant ages, to
" seek the alchemic secret by which hap-
" piness is to be extracted from the dross
" of life, give me a shorter and a sweeter
" path to information; let me thus raise

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" the sparkling goblet to my eager lip, and " quaff off immortality."

Thus saying, the duke poured out a glass of rich cordial which stood on the table, and drinking it off, said to Imogen,

" You see, madam, your wine is like " the nepenthe of Helen, for it gives the " cares, as well as the senses, of your guests " to oblivion."

Imogen, for the first time, now raised her timid looks to the face of de Beauvilliers: his eye met hers; a slight convulsion passed across his features: the paleness of her cheek was suffused with the crimson of a transient blush.

The duke arose, threw up the sash of the window, and calling to his esquire, who had just passed it on horseback, ordered his horses to be led out.

Imogen and the chevalier both arose. " You cannot mean to leave us!" demanded the latter, in a tone of amazement.

" My departure is unavoidable," re-

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turned the duke, in a hurried tone; "I "must either appear publicly in the coun- "try, or instantly leave it; the business "which brought me here is finished. It "is requisite I should instantly go to Paris, "and from thence, with the king's per- "mission, I shall set off for England with "the duke de Sully, who shortly visits "that country as ambassador from the "French court."

"This is as unexpected as it is disap- "pointing to us," said de Sorville, look- ing at Imogen; "but, my dear duke, "friendship has already exacted so much "from you, that what remains for her to "demand is not worthy of you to refuse. "Do you not plead with me, my sweet "Imogen? Do not your wishes unite with "mine to detain our mutual friend?"

"Certainly!" replied Imogen, in a voice scarcely articulate, while the colour- ing of her cheek varied alternately from white to red.

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" Then you remain with us," added the chevalier, " at least for a few days ?"

" A few days !" repeated the duke, with vehemence, " you might as well " name a few ages !"

" Come, come, my dear duke," continued the chevalier, " I know you can have " no such immediate pressing occasion to " visit Paris; and even though you had, " upon such an event as this, when the " destiny of two friends so dear to you is " on the point of being twined in one, " when—"

"Upon such occasions!" interrupted the duke, in a voice full of emotion, " even " the presence of a friend is an intrusion; " at least, were I so situated, I—" and he sunk on the seat of the window near which he stood.

" And yet," said the chevalier, " if " misery calls for the sympathy of friend- " ship as its only alleviation, so does the " excess of happiness call for its participa-

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" tion, as its only possible mode of increase.
" In a few days I shall be the happiest of
" men; but even my felicity will admit of
" addition, if from your hands I shall receive
" the beloved object who can alone con-
" firm it. Yes, my lord, add to all the
" obligations we mutually owe you, by
" acting as a father to this amiable being,
" whose mother has so often lavished on you
" the tenderest caresses of a parent; from
" your hands let me receive the daugh-
" ter of her who considered you as the son
" of her tender adoption. She has no
" father; supply to her the place of one.
" Look at her, my lord; she is, indeed,
" silent; but if those blushes could speak,
" if those half-breathed sighs were under-
" stood, if the eloquence of those gentle
" tears was acknowledged, your heart
" would not thus turn against the sup-
" plication which hers sends up with
" mine."

" Drive me not mad!" interrupted the

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duke, with a voice and air of wildness: and starting from his seat—"You know not "what you say: you know not what you "do—Worlds would not tempt me to "remain another moment beneath this "always fatal roof. My part is now "finished; I can act no longer; be happy; "for you deserve to be so; while I—"

The voice of Beauvilliers failed him; he hid his face in his cloak, and paused. Imogen, pale and faint, yet still endeavouring to support herself, sunk on a couch. De Sorville gazed on them both with looks of emotion and apparent amazement.

The duke at last raised his head; his eyes were red and inflamed, but their fire was softened by the moisture of tears: he approached the chevalier, and embraced him, then exclaimed:—

"Farewel! may you be as happy as your "virtues deserve you should be; but in "the midst of your joys, God of heaven! "—yes, of your joys, steal from the glow-

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" ing era of love one precious moment,
" and devote it to the recollection of him
" who was your friend, at the moment he
" might have found a sanction in his heart
" for being your enemy ; and who, amidst
" the general wreck of all he owned, of
" all he prized, still preserved his honour
" pure and unsullied : then envy him his
" triumphs, and give him your applause ;
" for he, who has learned to vanquish
" himself, claims the applause of the greatly
" virtuous as his reward."

The chevalier embraced him tenderly, but in silence, and in visible emotion. The dignified, though wild expression of sorrow which had shed itself over the countenance of the duke de Beauvilliers, now changed its character as he released himself from the arms of de Sorville, and turned towards Imogen : his eye's burning glance melted in tears of passion, every feature was touched with tenderness and despair ; fortitude appeared to struggle with

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both as snatching a last and ardent look at her, and he exclaimed :—

" Farewel, lady, for ever !"

" For ever!" repeated Imogen, stretching out her hands impulsively towards him, and raising the head which had hitherto drooped on her throbbing bosom ; this simple action flung aside her veil, and her countenance, no longer shaded, now appeared touched with an expression scarcely human.

Could a spirit of heaven feel an agony concomitant to the bliss of which its pure and sublimated nature is susceptible, such is the character and expression the inspired fancy of the sublimest genius would attach to the divine countenance of the celestial sufferer !

" Farewel then, for ever !" murmured Imogen in a voice low and tremulous. De Beauvilliers fell at her feet; he seized the trembling hands which were still extended to solicit a last clasp—he raised them to

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his eyes, and they were bathed in tears; he pressed them to his lips, and Imogen endeavoured to withdraw them.

"No!" exclaimed he, "thou shalt not "deprive me of my triumph. The greater "resignation already made, this, even this, "is nothing."

He arose, and still firmly grasping the hands of Imogen, he placed them in those of de Sorville, and clasping them both in his own, he added, in a deep and affecting voice:—

"Thy prayer is heard; receive her from "my hands: now, now, the victory is "mine! for know, that I too once dared "to adore her by whom thou art now be-"loved; for her I would have forfeited all. "My honour, my ambition, my duty, a "betrothed bride, a tender father, a ge-"nerous sovereign, weighed against Imo-"gen were but as a feather in the scale of "consideration; but she who led me to "the edge of the precipice was my saviour.

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" I was rejected, schooled into virtue, and
" taught to kiss the rod beneath whose
" lash I bled. But the dream is all, all
" over; and this might have been spared;
" but it is but just you should know the
" full value of the prize you possess; it is
" but just that I should expiate the dis-
" simulation of my past reserve towards
" you by this confession. In witnessing
" the happiness of my friend, I too, I am—
" happy—Oh! most happy!"—

Here a convulsive laugh broke from the faltering lips of de Beauvilliers; and, bending his head over the united hands he pressed in his, they were bathed with his tears. The silence of a moment ensued; then raising his hands and eyes to heaven, he faintly exclaimed:

" God for ever bless you both!" and covering his face with his cloak, he rushed to the door.

The chevalier, who during the whole affecting period appeared lost in silent and

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motionless amazement, now sprung after the duke, and leading him back, firmly exclaimed :

" Stay, my lord; neither amazement " nor emotion have induced me to inter- " rupt the unexpected declaration of your " sentiments. Suffer me then to claim a " moment's hearing for the expression of " mine."

The duke, with an air of surprize and impatience, bowed assent, and paced the room with an hurried step, while the chevalier, leaning against the frame of the window, coolly added :—

" There are injuries, my lord, so refined, " so impalpably delicate, that even the " guardian strictness of the law cannot " hold them in its cognizance; for, oh! its " watchful power cannot retribute the " mind's injured peace; it cannot raise " to life the soul's withered hopes, nor heal " those gangrene wounds which perfidy " has given to the tender and all-confiding

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" hearts: but nature, my lord, has erected " a tribunal in every manly heart, to " which the injured fly to seek redress, " and which avenges what it cannot com- " pensate—the tribunal of honour!"

" Sir, sir!" interrupted the duke with vehemence, " I do not, nay, I will not " understand you."

" The countess de St. Dorval," continued the chevalier, unmoved by the interruption, " is the daughter of my soul's " dearest friend; she was my ward, and is " my affianced bride; in each and all of " these sacred characters her injuries are " mine. Nay, my lord, I must be heard. " When first the spirit of adventure in one " of its romantic vicissitudes betrayed her " to your notice, you found her like a " beautiful flower, blushing and fragrant; " in her native solitude; you left her fad- " ing and drooping for the loss of those " caressing attentions, which once receiv- " ed had become necessary to her exist-

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" ence. Transplanted to the world's wide
" garden, even in the blood-stained path
" of war again her sweetness captivat-
" ed all your senses; in the delirium of
" passion you would have forced her for
" ever from the parent stem, round whose
" trunk she had but just entwined. You
" proffered love, and she believed you;
" you proffered ruin, ruin to yourself, and
" she rejected; you she saved, but herself
" she could not. Still affectionate, though
" hopeless; faithful, though desponding;
" love, fatal, though cherished, still chased
" from her bosom the halcyon power of
" peace, till virtue subdued what even rea-
" son could not banish. Then to another's
" vows she hearkened, her promise plight-
" ed, and hand bestowed, and peace and
" happiness and honour smiled on her fu-
" ture life; when you, my lord, free from
" the tie which had hitherto formed a
" chain in the barrier of your mutual
" wishes, again appeared, and beneath

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" the sanction of her betrothed husband's
" friendship (who, all-confiding, suspected
" not the man whom most he loved),
" sought her presence, revived the failed
" spark of latent passion, and once more
" taught her struggling heart to love, and
" to despair. Pride, virtue, and delicacy,
" taught her to conceal that which she
" could not subdue; and beneath the gaudy
" veil of pleasure she hid the wounds of
" an anguished soul. And now, my
" lord, the nature of her injuries, and con-
" sequently of mine, being thus briefly
" investigated, the law of reparation de-
" mands its own enforcement."

" Enforce it!" frantically exclaimed De Beauvilliers, throwing himself at the chevalier's feet, and, tearing open the bosom of his dress with one hand, he presented his sword with the other to De Sorville; who, flinging it away, and raising the duke in his arms, said with a dignified smile:

" No, my lord, I thirst not for ven-

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" geance, but for justice: I demand it
" for that all-suffering and injured inno-
" cent; I demand it for myself, and, lastly,
" I demand it for you. Your errors have
" been the errors of an ardent and unso-
" phisticated nature, of a romantic dispo-
" sition, of impetuous and enthusiastic
" feelings too freely indulged; but your
" sufferings have been such as might break
" the heart which sustained them. Wed-
" ded from principles of honour to the
" woman you did not love, while your
" conduct towards her was irreproachable,
" your secret thoughts were still fixed on
" the perfections of her you had resigned.
" Every letter with which you honoured
" me breathed, unknown to yourself, the
" despondency of an enamoured soul;
" and when free and unshackled you again
" appeared in the world, while others be-
" lieved that the spell of ambition lured
" you to a court, I alone beheld you drawn
" from the beloved solitude of despair by

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" the magic of reviving love and latent
" hope :—and then while I blamed, I pi-
" tied ; while I pitied, I admired. The
" witness of those immunities with which
" others were invested, yet without daring
" to make known your own claims, with-
" out even daring to complain, I beheld
" you involved in those silent sufferings
" peculiar to a love tender, ardent, and
" irrevocable as yours, when opposed by
" reason, by prudence, and by honour. I
" saw the difficulty by which you were
" restrained from opposing yourself to the
" host of slanderous enemies the supe-
" riority and unguarded conduct of the
" object of our mutual solicitude elicited.
" We conversed on the subject, and at my
" instigation you flew to warn her with
" the anxiety of love, while you fancied
" you appeared but in the character of
" friendship : but the agitation in which I
" found you on your return convinced
" me of the danger of the task you had

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" undertaken; yet the proud triumph
" which basked in your eyes when you
" pressed me impulsively to your heart,
" convinced me honour was still victorious
" over the weakness of affection. Again,
" in the shades of Vaucluse I witnessed
" its triumph:—yes, while I pursued your
" steps in those haunts long since devoted
" to the indulgence of careless passion, I
" beheld you, in the midst of that profound
" solitude, within the very grasp of temp-
" tation, still fly for refuge to thy honour,
" and still find it there; for the sympathy
" of taste, of sentiment, conducted in the
" same moment three votarists to the
" shrine of Petrarch, each unknown to
" the other, and what then passed there
" unseen I observed. But then, as now,
" the struggle was already over; and you,
" doubtless, then beheld in her whom you
" have now bestowed on me, the wife of
" your friend only. But, my lord, while
" thus secure in your own strength, proud

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" in your own consciousness, that bosom
" whose peace you have destroyed, that
" heart whose happiness you have frus-
" trated, calls, though silently, for the re-
" paration of its injuries."

The chevalier paused:—he advanced towards Imogen, who, motionless and pale, betrayed no appearance of life but what the expression of unutterable anguish marked in her countenance: he gazed on her for a moment in silence, till his eyes swam in tears, his frame shook, his breast heaved with convulsive sighs. Imogen stretched out her arms towards him: he received her within his embrace, and pressed her for a moment to his breast: then holding her from him, he turned towards the duke, who, no longer able to move, leaned against a pillar for support.

" My lord," he exclaimed, while an air of solemn dignity invested his whole person, and a celestial light seemed to shed

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its lumination over his countenance; "my "lord, you have had your victory—I too "am ambitious of a triumph!" Then, taking the cold and trembling hand of Imogen, he placed it in that of de Beauvilliers, and clasping both in his own, he raised his eyes to heaven, and in a voice deep, solemn, and affecting, added: "Son of de Montargis, daughter of St. "Dorval, be happy. May the God who "created you for each other confirm you "in virtue and felicity pure and lasting as "the frailty of human nature will admit "of; and may your earthly connection be "but as the beautiful symbol of that eter- "nal union which awaits you in another "and a better world!"

Then, encircling them both in his arms, after a moment's pause he added:—

"Farewel! I leave you in peace, I shall "soon meet you in happiness; you are both "triumphant in virtue, nor do I depart "subdued; but respect my feelings, nor

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" violate them by benevolent but unavail-
" ing intrusion. Beloved and virtuous be-
" ings, once more farewel!"

With these words, falteringly pronounced, de Sorville loosed himself from the grasp of the almost fainting Imogen, and resigning her into the arms of Beauvilliers, with a countenance in which heroism and tenderness were blended, but with a firm, a dignified, and determined air, he left the room.

The silence of amazement, of ecstacy unutterable, shed around its stilly spell: many minutes elapsed and all still was delirium. De Beauvilliers still entranced, hung over, in doubtful bliss, his precious burthen; Imogen, dying the death of joy, lifeless, yet with life, panted on his bosom, till her heart catching a vital impulse from the throb of his, she awakened to a sense of her situation; their eyes met, for the first time since the birth of their felicity, transport illumined the mutual glance, and they

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gazed round for the participation of that God-like friend who had been the creator of their bliss—but he was gone. A sense of all he had sacrificed for their sakes flushed on their minds, and the burning glance of novel and sanctioned love was mellowed by the tear of mourning friendship; they withdrew from each other, and wept apart. In the sympathy of their sorrow again they approached; their tears mingled as they flowed, and lost their bitterness as they mingled; in the similitude of their kindred feelings, the half-breathed exclamations of love and happiness breathed on their lips; but amidst the murmurs of exquisite felicity, gratitude poured its blessings on the head of him whose virtue had bestowed it.

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CONCLUSION.

No more the thirsty entrance of this soil
Shall damp her lips with her own children's blood;
No more shall trenching war channel her fields,
Nor bruise her flowrets with the armed hoofs
Of hostile paces.—These opposed eyes,
Which, like the meteors of a troubled heaven,
All of one nature, of one substance bred,
Did lately meet on the intestine shock
And furious close of civil butchery,
Shall now in mutual well-beseeming ranks
March all one way, and be no more opposed
Against acquaintance, kindred, allies;
The edge of war, like an ill-sheathed knife,
No more shall cut his master.

SHAKSPEAR.

THE chevalier de Sorville fled from the chateau de St. Dorval to the villa de Fiora. On the preceding night his servant had arrived with horses from Avignon, and by the following morning every thing was in secret readiness for his departure; for im-

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pulse held no influence over his conduct, and his actions were always the result of reason, of virtue, and of truth. The loving and beloved beings whom his goodness had snatched from the lowest abyss of virtuous misery to the highest degree of all human felicity, respected his commands too highly to venture on their immediate violation. But as friendship only can administer to suffering friendship; and as decorum prevented the countess de St. Dorval from continuing the duke de Beauvilliers as her guest, or from uniting herself to him who still wore the "customary suit of solemn "black" for another, after a few precious days, snatched by love from the impious mandate of cold propriety, de Beauvilliers tore himself from the pure delights of hallowed tenderness, sacrificed his wishes to gratitude and prudence, and followed his great and generous friend to his voluntary exilement. But sweet are the sacrifices which virtue exacts, and the felicity of de

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Beauvilliers' heart was now sanctified by the approval of his reason and his honour. In the absence of her lover and her friend the happy Imogen resigned herself to the most delicious reveries; even this enforced and temporary absence gave a new character to her passion, and while it bestowed repose on the poignant agitation of her feelings, it mingled with the pure and lively ardour of a mistress the tender and anticipated solicitudes of a wife. Meantime an epistolary correspondence supplied the place of a more intimate intercourse; and in the constant commutation of refined and elegant sentiments, warmed by mutual tenderness, and animated by playful wit, the sympathy of the mind, as well as of the heart was still evinced and still discovered with new and reciprocal sensations of pride and transport.

In less than three months from the day of his departure, the duke de Beauvilliers returned to the chateau de St. Dorval;

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and in the presence of the friends, dependants, tenantry, and vassals, of their respective families, the last survivor of the illustrious house of St. Dorval bound up her destiny and future life in that of the chief of the noble family of Montargis. Religious and party prejudice beheld the union with incredulity and amazement; but the incense which virtue and reason offered up on the altar of love and philanthropy, to the god of truth, ascended to heaven. On the day of the solemnization of their nuptials, the duke de Beauvilliers presented to his lovely bride the following letter:

From the Chevalier de Sorville.

"When these lines shall reach the hands "of Imogen she will be the wife of the "Duke de Beauvilliers; but she will not "be less the friend of de Sorville. That "heart so intimately known to me, that "tender heart which ever makes the woes "of others all its own, even in the midst

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" of all its abundant joys, will often heave
" a sigh to the memory of him for whom
" no joys exist; and Imogen in receiving
" from the hand of love the rosy wreath
" of bliss, will dew its leaves with pity's
" tear, shed to the recollection of him for
" whom no roses bloom; suffer me, then,
" oh! amiable being, to consummate the
" happiness of which I proudly boast my-
" self to be the author, by assuring you the
" misery you deplore lives but in the ap-
" prehensions of thy too grateful heart;
" and to confess, that the only chance of
" happiness I could rescue from a fate but
" sparingly enriched with joys, was in the
" resignation of her whose misery would
" have confirmed mine, confirmed it in
" the consciousness that I was its author;
" for, oh! Imogen, thy virtue, not thy
" heart, still gave thee to my wishes; and
" in the first moment of our first interview, I
" saw that that heart was no longer at thy
" own disposal—and that, though thou

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" didst return with me to thy new-found
" father, thy heart remained with thy
" amiable conqueror of Laon; and yet I
" did not then suspect that the birth of thy
" tenderness was of an anterior date; nor
" do I now blame the delicacy of thy re-
" serve; may it ever be the modest charac-
" teristic of woman's timid tender feelings,
" when under the all-pervading influence
" of that sentiment she was created so pro-
" foundly to feel. Long did I watch the
" secret workings of thy heart; nor ever
" suspected the selfish motive of my anxi-
" ety, until I fancied I beheld thy hopes
" expire on the bosom of impossibility;
" and then from the dying embers of thy
" desponding love mine received its first
" awakening beam of hope. Believing
" what I wished, I fancied I was dear to you,
" and willingly embraced the illusion
" which shed the colouring of love over
" the ardently expressed feelings of grati-
" tude and esteem. But, oh! Imogen,

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" when in the world I watched the first
" moment of thy revived intercourse with
" the object of thy first-born tenderness,
" when I beheld that impassioned commu-
" nion of soul which a single glance sup-
" ported between you—then, even then,
" I resigned thee for ever; then I laid the
" basis of that conduct which was to con-
" firm your future happiness—the happi-
" ness of the most amiable of men—but
" which to pursue, in the frailty of human
" weakness, cost some vital pangs to an
" heart which now is proudly victorious
" over itself. As the husband of Imogen
" I must have been wretched, for I must
" have been guilty; as her friend I must
" be happy, for I have rendered her so:
" farewel, then, dear and virtuous friend,
" farewell; let me continue to hold the
" second place in thy affection and thy
" memory, until my nerved heart and firm
" soul shall again enable me personally
" to reclaim my precious rights, as thy

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" guardian and thy friend; and, oh!
" shouldst thou in the fond exaggeration
" of gratitude, or in the glowing partiality
" of friendship, view my conduct in a more
" elevated light than it deserves; look on
" it but as the offspring of a mind which,
" though not free from the errors of hu-
" manity, has long been emancipated from
" the prejudices of the world; and which,
" in its moral practices or religious faith,
" has still made truth its object, and reason
" its guide. 'Tis at the source of the for-
" mer, 'tis by the beam of the latter, that
" all human virtue, all human wisdom, all
" human felicity, are to be found.

" De Sorville."

On the marriage of Henry the IVth of France with Mary De Medicis the duke and duchess de Beauvilliers appeared for the first time since their union at the court of Paris. An adulatory and sordid world pressed round to behold the renovation of

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that splendour and magnificence with whose supposed extinction it had fled. Supported on one side by her illustrious husband, on the other by her guardian friend, in all the panoply of youth and beauty, in all the splendour of exalted rank, the blush of triumph glowing on her cheek, the flame of conscious virtue victorious over envious defamation playing in her eyes, the duchess de Beauvilliers approached the august presence of her sovereign and his royal consort, and received in return from royal graciousness the nuptial congratulation she gracefully paid.

Slander, like fire, soon becomes exhausted, in proportion to the fierceness with which it burns. The effects of that malice which the charms and genius of the countess de St. Dorval had awakened, long since slumbered in oblivion; but the homage, the admiration, they had excited, again revived with fresh ardour and popularity as she wreathed her roses round the head of

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the duchess de Beauvilliers, divested them of the thorns which censure had shed amidst their beauties when they blushed on the brow of the countess de St. Dorval. Still possessing the liberality to encourage and reward in others those talents she so eminently possessed herself, she still appeared as the presiding deity of taste and the generous patroness of genius. But it was of taste veiled in the decent drapery of decorum, and corrected, though not swayed, by the custom of the day in which she lived. And while she stretched out a supporting hand to virtuous merit, from the fatal connexion of genius and vice she turned abhorrent and indignant. The friend of the unavoidably wretched, and the reclaimer of the self-created miserable, she had learnt in her worldly noviciate to distinguish between impulse and principle, and the charities which still abundantly flowed from the benevolence of her nature were

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now presented to their objects by the hand of justice.

Never was there a period in the historic records of France more congenial by its political situation to the peace, the happiness of social and domestic enjoyment, than that when after a three months residence at Paris the duke and duchess de Beauvilliers returned to the land of their forefathers, accompanied by their inestimable friend the chevalier de Sorville. The sword of civil war deposited with the volume of sectarian controversy on the altar of concord and religious toleration, confidence, peace, and affluence, shed their rich blessings on every side.

The laborious husbandman anticipated in full and happy security to reap the fruits of his toil, and to enjoy the produce of that grain which the devastation of civil warfare had so often blasted in the germ.

The artist and the mechanic found in

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the resources of their genius and their industry the reward of competency and the stimulus of applause.

The nobleman, hanging up his arms amidst the trophies of his ancestors, retired from the blood-stained field to the peaceful and dear domains of his inheritance, to exercise the patriarchal virtues in the bosom of his family, and to insinuate himself into the long-estranged hearts of his vassals and dependants.

Licentiousness banished from the army, the warrior became at once the protector and the idol of the people; and their patriot king, released from the perplexity of political engagement and the tumult of unavailing warfare, resigned himself to the mild influence of social happiness, and bestowed on his subjects the felicity he enjoyed.

Such were the great and inestimable blessings which arose from even the tem-

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porary suspension of party faction and religious intolerance.

Such was the happy period when Imogen, in the bosom of her family, strictly fulfilling all the social duties of life, evinced that the liberal cultivation of the female mind is the best security for the virtues of the female heart; and that the genius, the talents, and graces, of the countess de St. Dorval, when regulated by prudence and accompanied by good sense, were neither incompatible with the domestic qualities of the duchess de Beauvilliers, or the meek and modest virtues of the novice of St. Dominick.

FINIS.

T. Gillet, Printer, Salisbury-Square.

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